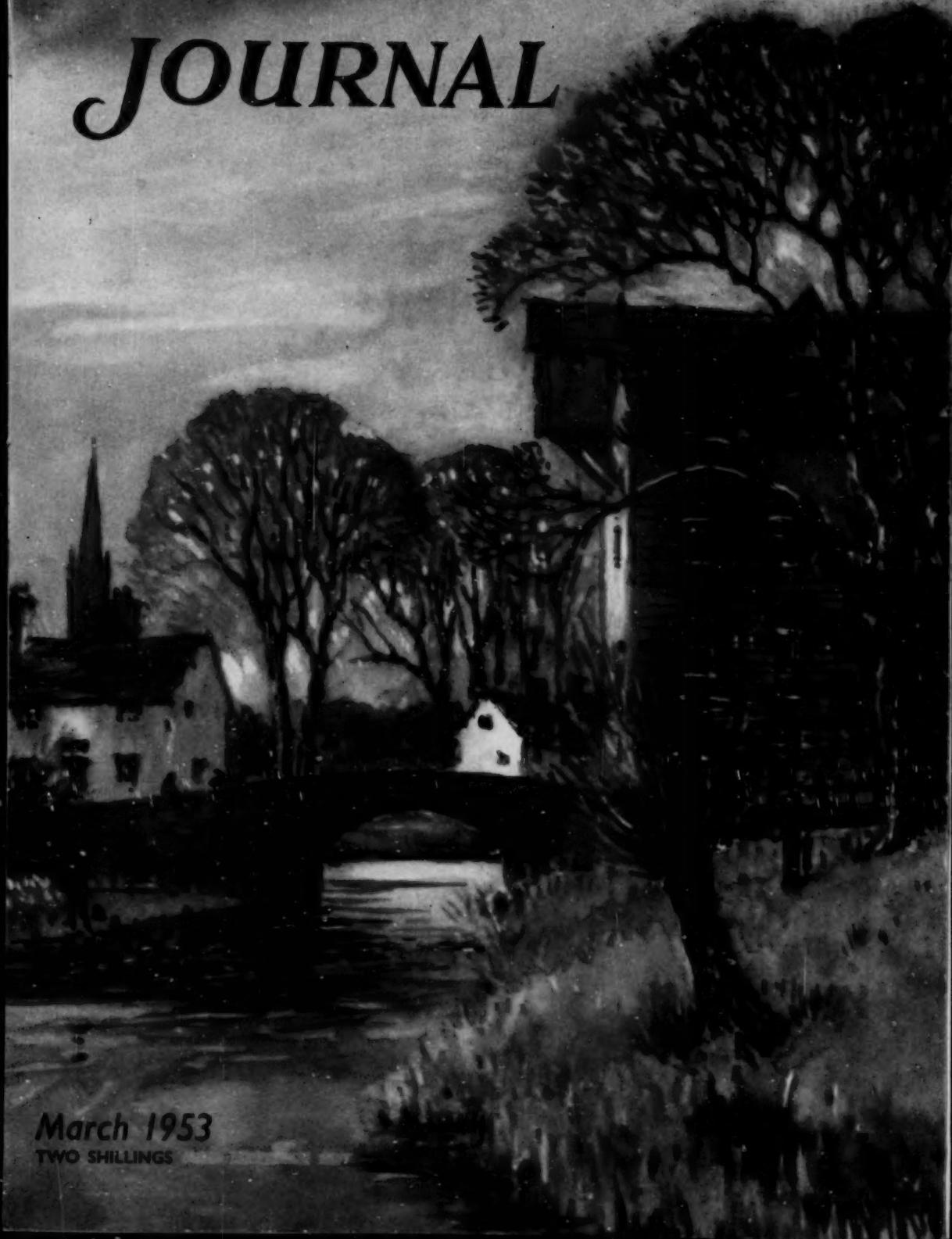


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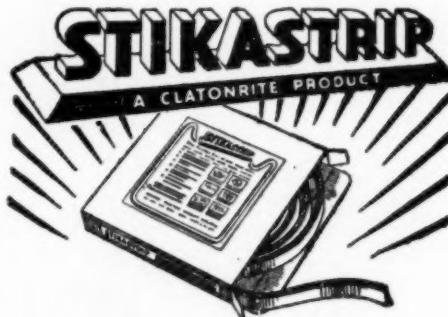
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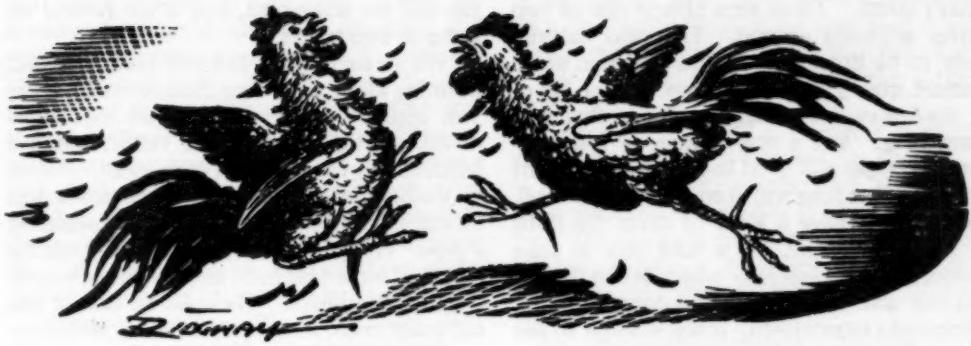
This is indeed an odd newspaper

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The Gamblers

L. DUXBURY

WHEN I was a kid, me and Jim Sowerbutt used to go walks on Saturdays. We were about fourteen then, and on Saturday morning when we'd done all the shopping at the Co-op stores and collected the steak-puddings for dinner from Bainbridge's on the top road we'd hurry our mothers up and get our dinners down us as quick as we could. Whichever had finished first would shout in at the back-door for the other. Then we'd rush off and call in at Birtwhistle's for five Wood-bines to share between us. This was the only time we smoked, and we took care to get rid of the smell and the taste by taking great gulps of fresh air before we got back home. I've never really enjoyed smoking so much since then.

Every Saturday we went somewhere fresh, roaming over fields and moors until we knew the district pretty thoroughly all round. None of our pals seemed to care much for this sort of thing, because we seldom met any other kids of our age on these outings. They mostly went to the pictures or the football match, while some of the less sensitive types went on organised rambles with the Christian Endeavour or Co-op Ramblers. We couldn't

stand any of these Boy Scout efforts; they were too much like Sunday-school picnics—everybody trying to be pleasant and have a jolly time, like community hymn-singing, and not one of them with a serious thought in his jolly little napper, not one of them wanting to find out about anything, because they weren't aware that there was anything to find out about.

The town where we lived in East Lancashire was set on the edge of the Pennines. Outside the customary walks there were great stretches of moorland to be explored. We'd come across old stone quarries and remains of mine-workings, and we'd speculate on when they were used, what sort of men worked in them, and what the town was like in those days. Sometimes we'd find a broken-down old cottage or part of a mill that a hundred years of industrial revolution had passed over. We'd create our own civilisations, and people them with our own fanciful creatures, from Palæolithoid down to the manager of Sykes and Fothergill's, where our fathers worked. Not a big jump in the human process if you knew the manager of Sykes and Fothergill's. Strangest of all, and most fascinating, was

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the discovery and realisation that there were men who still lived and worked in these desolate, windy places. Not the farmers. They didn't count. There were always one or two farms scattered around. That was natural, only to be expected. But to find that some ancient quarry was still in use, with a bit of a donkey-engine chugging along—that was something. And a row of three or four dry-stone cottages still lived in by the quarrymen! Well, it was a long way from any sort of road. True, they'd have a lorry to carry the slabs of stone, but, well, it's a long way to take millstone grit, especially when bricks are so popular and there are half-a-dozen thriving brickworks nearer town. It was difficult to see who was using stone these days, anyway.

The men, we thought, had lived there for generations and were of the same stock as those who had built stone walls over every part of the Pennines when sheepwalks were a big thing in the old days. They were, we imagined, used to this isolation—preferred it even. To us they seemed different beings from the rest of the townsfolk, unacquainted with the steelworks, the brick factories, and the weaving-sheds. A different breed of men, nearer to the earth, true survivals of ancient British craftsmen.

ONE Saturday, in winter, me and Jim Sowerbutt started off early. There was snow on the hills and we were itching to get up into it. Up past the printworks lodge we went. This was the quickest way to the moors beyond Bash, some of the wildest country on this side of the Pennines and unknown in British geography. No beauty-spot, but one of the most beautiful places I know, grim and desolate, with grey moor-grass and black stone walls, dusty-white gravel-pits, and yellow-brown outcrops of sandstone. There were cart-tracks winding in gullies and tiny streams draining miles of these uplands. Always the land was sodden. Tales of bogs and quagmires echoed loudly in local legend.

It was strange in the snow. We'd been over these hills many times before, but every time it was different. This place had a distinct life of its own. The snow had piled up in the small ravines in which we walked consistently, crunching through the top crust and making tremendous holes, for ever trying to find the deepest part. Over the wall of the top reservoir was a large iron pipe, which we straddled,

and amused ourselves for a while spitting into the water below. There was no ice, so we didn't stay long. Back over the wall and up the hill we scrambled, and a bit further on came to two tracks.

'We've never been that way before,' I said, pointing along one. Jim thought we had, but you couldn't really tell with all that snow about. It led down a little valley, round a hillock, and bang up to a stone wall. There, on the other side, a few yards lower down, was an old man leaning on the wall and smoking a pipe. He eyed us steadily for a long minute and then turned his head and continued gazing over the landscape. He must be one of the old quarrymen, we agreed, spending his leisure surveying his own territory, which he obviously loved. We were impressed by this figure with such a deep-rooted feeling for the beauty of this wild moorland. In our minds he became immediately a symbol, a symbol of something timeless and deep, a part of the earth itself, a man wholly unattracted by the pleasures of the town, careless of the barren pastimes of cinemas, football, and betting. We didn't speak to him. We were too young and too raw for that. Instead, we climbed the wall and went on, exchanging our earnest and highly romantic thoughts.

SLEET started to come down, cold and stinging. We dropped down into a gully for shelter, dodging along beside the course of a rivulet which bounced and tumbled over the sharp stones and shale. Up above, on the right, was a broken wired-fence, and there stood a man watching us. He was young, with a sharp, pinched face, and wore a white muffler round his throat.

'Looks like a collier,' I said. 'What's he doing up here?'

'Might be pigeon-flying,' Jim said.

'What, in this weather? More likely doing a bit of rabbiting, though I can't see his dog.'

'You don't get rabbits over this side,' said Jim. 'It's too high and the ground's too hard. For rabbits you've got to go over yonder,' and he waved his hand in the Ozzie direction. 'Still, there might be hares. You never know!'

We left it at that. We hoped there were hares. We'd never seen a hare. When we looked again, the man had turned his back on us, but he was still standing there though the sleet was beating down heavily, bitterly. Soon we admitted we didn't quite know where we

THE GAMBLERS

were, so, climbing a hill, we scanned the grey countryside, speckled with white under a grey sky. We could just make out the sheen of the top reservoir away to the right. Then, relieved at finding this landmark, we stood and enjoyed the prospect, revelling in the buffeting icy wind and sleet. Suddenly we became aware that, besides the man by the wall and the one by the fence, there were several figures, all scattered at long intervals. There was one over there and another a bit further on, then another over on the other side. Altogether, there must have been about a dozen—and they all seemed to be just standing there, gazing, like us, at the sombre landscape.

'Perhaps they are after hares,' said Jim. 'Perhaps it's organised. You never know.'

We had no idea how people went about hunting hares, but we hoped these men were doing it. It was a strange sight and a little disquieting to us to see so many people all at once on our usually lonely excursions. Anyhow, the wind was whipping through us and we slithered downhill, taking the reservoir as our general direction.

As we rounded a bend in the gully, we saw that we were entering the bottom of a quarry which we hadn't noticed from above. The track bent to the left and opened out into the quarry-floor. Right in front of us was a crowd of men, arguing, shouting, talking excitedly, while a huge haze of smoke from their cigarettes rested quietly in the damp air. What the deuce were they up to?

They were split up into several groups. The men in the one nearest to us were watching something intently. One or two of them were bending down and bustling about in their midst. Then we noticed the skittles set up in front of them, with a long run, smoothed off and cleared of snow and shale. Farther back, two small groups were squatting, collier-fashion, bending forwards eagerly and shouting raucously as each took turns with the dice. But the greatest tumult came from beneath an overhanging part of the quarry-face, where a huge opening had been made like the mouth of a large cave. Here hoarse voices were clamouring, dark, serge-clad figures waved slips of paper, pushing each other and changing places, giving the impression of a heaving, writhing mass which kept together in the same place.

We were staggered by the scene and stood,

gaping. One of the men came across towards us. 'What do you kids want?'

We didn't know what to say. We were out of our depth. So as not to prove scared, I put on a swagger and pulled the crumpled Woodbine packet out and asked the man for a light.

He laughed. 'Sure you can have a light. Come here.'

I went over, taking a cigarette from the packet and putting it between my lips.

He reached out, calmly took the packet from my hand and slipped it in his waistcoat, took the cigarette from my mouth and proceeded to light it from the stump he was smoking. He gave me the stump. 'There's your light!'

Jim was standing where I'd left him.

'You got some gaspers too, young 'un?'

I was afraid Jim was going to run away, but he grinned awkwardly and shuffled forward. 'Th-those were half mine!'

'Well, well! You'd better share that with him.' The man threw back his head and laughed loudly. His waistcoat bobbed up and down and I could see his shirt, black with coal-dust, stretched tightly round his heavy belly. 'If you want to see some fun, come with me,' he told us. Pushing us in front of him, he shouted: 'Hey, lads, I've got two young cockerels here!'

Most of the men paid no attention. Of those who looked up, some of them laughed, but others grumbled. 'Blasted kids! Poking their noses into everything. Kick their arses and send 'em home!'

Me and Jim were scared, too scared to say anything. We daren't look at each other in case we saw the other was afraid too. Looking around the men, I saw a few I knew by sight. These were no earthy quarrymen. There were thick-set miners with coal-pocked faces, close-cropped moulders and steel-workers, oily-skinned spinners with big feet, here and there a farmer, outstanding with his thick, red neck and tanned face. Nearly all were from the town or neighbouring villages. It was incredible. This congregation, betting with eagerness and ferocity, must have walked miles on this bitter winter's day over the roughest ground in the district, not from any love of nature but from sheer thirst for gambling. It was obvious, too, that they came regularly to this spot from the way they were organised. The men we'd seen standing so patiently on the moors were undoubtedly scouts, set there to watch for police and such-

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like snoopers. We were kids. They hadn't bothered about us.

But now, in this gamblers' hideout, well, it was too much for us. We couldn't grasp it. We knew there was pigeon-flying and whippet-racing on the moors. We knew there was fishing and, in summer, swimming in the top reservoir. But this—we never knew the gambling instinct was as strong as all that. And, what was more, how did they keep it so secret? We'd never even heard a whisper amongst the other kids, which only goes to show.

Out of the side of his mouth Jim whispered something to me about it being an experience. I shot him a glance. He was shivering. Well, it was cold.

WE were brought to a stop just outside the cave and a number of the men who weren't playing clustered round us. A tall, leering fellow, with dark, sunken eyes and a neck like a tortoise, came up and pinched our biceps between finger and thumb. 'A couple of turkey-cocks!' he said.

'Bantams!' somebody suggested. They all roared with laughter. We didn't see what there was to laugh at, but we grinned accordingly.

A round man, who looked like a butcher, in a bowler-hat—the only bowler in a sea of flat caps—was saying something to the big man who'd pinched our fags. Whatever it was he was saying he seemed urgent enough about it. He kept nodding his head up and down and his podgy hands waved this way and that, helping him out with his words, though he didn't seem to need much help the way they kept pouring out. The big man listened and grunted. He seemed to be uncertain about something or other, but several of the butcher's cronies chipped in, and after some argument he pushed his cap back and scratched his head. 'All right then, after the other business,' he said.

All this sounded very ominous to us, because they kept throwing glances at me and Jim while they were arguing. We came into it somewhere, that was clear. Was it this fun the big man had told us about? I thought he'd meant the skittles, which would have been a bit of all right. I'd never seen skittles played before, not grown-up man-size skittles. But it couldn't be that, because that particular crowd were wandering over, all wet

through, a few of them staying behind to kick shale and mud and scatter a few rocks over the runway. The dice-throwers had already given up. We seemed to be the centre of a terrific hubbub. These gamblers seemed to be taking as much interest in us as though they'd never seen anything like us before, which I thought was strange, because kids of our age and size were by no means uncommon in that part of the world. In fact, some high-minded thinkers held that there were a damn sight too many of us and that something ought to be done about cutting down the birthrate of weavers and steelworkers and suchlike working types.

There was also talk of scrapping and fights floating about in the air, and I wondered who was going to do the fighting. I was getting a bit fed up, too, with the way some of the younger men kept pinching my biceps. I hadn't much to begin with, and I was thinking that some of these strong, black fingers and thumbs would end up by snapping them off altogether. Looking at Jim, I could see he was feeling the same way about it.

EVERYBODY started drifting into the cave. Our big friend, who was smoking another of our Woodbines, got us by the shoulders and led us inside. The cave was a lot bigger than we'd thought. The noise as the men packed in grew and became deafening with the echoes. There was a scooped-out hollow in the middle of the floor, round which a ring of stones about two feet high had been built. We were squeezed close up to this wall and told to squat down. The men crowded round, wedging tight, only leaving an opening at the front. Two men came from somewhere with a couple of wicker-baskets, the sort they keep pigeons in. I felt myself sweating. Well, it was hot in there. I knew what was coming all right. Up till then I'd thought cock-fighting had died out in the last century. That's what they'd told us at school, together with a lot of other things, such as it being a nasty, cruel business, which only low, slummy drunks, who'd be much better off in chapel praising God for the pleasure of drawing coal or forging steel for Sykes and Fothergill, would indulge in.

My imagination told me it was going to be cruel. I was afraid of that. I looked round at the faces, tense and expectant. The men were a tough, hard lot. As for cruelty, well, they were cruel too, because they'd never thought about it, whether they were or not.

THE GAMBLERS

Their work was cruel, their lives were cruel. Cruelty was something they'd had a lot to do with. They'd had stacks of it shoved at them one way or another and the cruelty they dealt out would have to be pretty enormous to add up to that lot. But I wasn't thinking that way then. I was concerned overmuch with what was happening to my own feelings. That was before I'd worked in the foundries.

One of the two men opened the lid of his basket, put his hands in and brought out a bantam cock, which he threw into the ring. The bird ruffed its gold and black feathers, shook its badly-clipped wings and strutted about, treading daintily. I was sorry for the bird and angry with the men who were examining it keenly, picking out the finer points and weighing up its fighting possibilities. They kept silent as it scratched over the stone floor. Then, as it wandered near the basket, its owner leaned over and like a flash seized it and shut it up once more. The second man came forward and the same thing happened to the cock in the other basket. Immediately the betting started. Money was handed over, figures written on scraps of paper. For the most part each man was his own bookmaker. The man in the bowler-hat was doing good business. He seemed to be somebody. Bets and money were handed over to him from all sides, whichever bird you fancied. I didn't quite get this, but then I never was much good at figures, and he looked as though he wasn't losing anything. A bowler-hat on a Saturday afternoon was a sure sign of prosperity. When all the bets were laid, the baskets were opened again and the cocks dropped into the pit, one after the other. A steady murmur filled the cave, the murmur of men breathing deeply and quickly, while through it the scraping of the birds' feet on the hard ground was clearly heard as they walked slowly round each other. I saw that each cock had been furnished with wicked steel spurs that weren't there before. They gleamed white and looked huge on the twig-like legs of the small birds, and the sight made me feel all tight inside. At first there was a little half-hearted pecking. Then one of the birds made a rush, wings flapping, claws outstretched, head drawn back. The other rose to meet it. There was no clash, no squawks, no sound. Just a ball of feathers bouncing up and down and a considerable number of free feathers flying off at random. They fluttered away, then back again, legs striking, necks stabbing, with great speed and

ferocity. The lack of noise was weird. You expected to hear some tremendous clamour from all this viciousness, but these fluffy balls of fury drew themselves up into long, thin springs, like snakes, and gave and received savage blows in silence. To suit this, the spectators toned their voices down to low mutters of appreciation, making the sharp tapping of beak on beak and claw on claw sound stranger than ever. Apart from torn feathers, there was little sign of injury either, but you couldn't tell, there was too much feather.

There was no slacking, no stopping for breath. As the cocks pirouetted, first one way, then the other, I saw that something had happened to one of the birds' eyes. The black bead with the hard glitter was no longer there. In its place was a tiny patch of red. I felt myself retch, but forgot it as the feathers began to fly faster than before. All the men pressed forward, closer, hissing breath through their teeth. It was impossible to tell which bird was which, the speed and flurry were so great. Suddenly there were two separate birds, one lying on the ground, its legs twitching, the other scratching over the floor a couple of yards away as though nothing exciting had ever happened to it in all its life. This, I noticed, was the one that had lost an eye. The other, now still, had a lot of red on the side of its neck, growing larger as the feathers absorbed the blood. The one-eyed victor strutted about the ring unconcerned, engaged in its endless search for food. It gave one squawk as its owner grabbed it and pushed it back into the basket. Someone took away the corpse and once more money changed hands, shouts and laughter broke out and filled the cave with tremendous din. Neither Jim nor I could sit still. We wanted to go but couldn't see how we could get away.

'**A**RE they ready?' shouted the man in the bowler.

'Come on, lads,' said the big man. 'Get your jackets off.'

We stared at him. 'What for?'

'Come on, get in that ring. We'll see what sort of gamecocks you'd make!'

We weren't quite sure whether we were supposed to fight each other or the bantam. I wasn't so keen on either, but I was dead-scared of the latter idea.

'But we're pals!' said Jim.

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'So were those bantams,' somebody shouted. And catcalls and threats started hurtling across as the men began to get impatient.

So we looked at each other and did as we were told. We had to roll our sleeves up, and the betting started all over again. 'What do we get out of this?' I said, trying to be funny.

'You'll get a thick ear if you don't put up a good scrap!'

Well, we began to circle round and tap each other. We'd done a lot of sparring together and in the ordinary way could keep it up for hours. But the men wanted blood. You could tell that. There was nothing quiet about this event. I've never been threatened with so many tortures or had so much sarcasm shouted at me quite so loudly. Trouble was I believed these threats and I was so nervous it put me off my stroke. It had the same effect on Jim, too, because he poked me on the nose, which he never did in our friendly bouts.

I've got a nose that bleeds as soon as it sees a fist, and it keeps on bleeding. It stings too and, what with the tears in my eyes from this blow and the fear in my inside, I lashed out and caught Jim on the ear. He'd stopped when he saw me bleeding, so he took this for an unfriendly act. We didn't notice the crowd much after that. We forgot all about the scientific blows we often practised and just belted into

each other, using heads, elbows, everything except feet. They were only used when you were in real trouble.

Soon we were on the floor, rolling over and over and pummelling each other. When a flash of reason urged us to stop, we were jerked back into the mist of blood by the yells of the crowd in our ears.

I felt myself being dragged away, and the big man was holding us, one in each hand. 'That's enough. You didn't do so bad,' he said. Others were protesting that we ought to carry on, but the big man was firm. He handed us our jackets and led us outside, winking good-humouredly at some of the men who ribbed him. We were a bit dazed, but it was fresh outside. He took us out of the quarry and, as we brushed ourselves down, showed us the road to take. As we turned to go, he fished in his pockets and brought something out and gave it to us. Ten Woodbines! Before we could thank him he was striding back to the quarry, a big, black figure of a man against the grey and yellow rocks.

Jim and I said nothing about that afternoon, either then or later, and we never went that way again. I'd forgotten all about it until I returned to live in my home town some weeks ago. Now I wonder! Those hills are still there.

April First Story : *Alice, Where Are You?* by Ianthe Jerrold.

Giverton and Haverton

*Those who live in Giverton
Are laughing, jolly folks,
Brimming-full of kindlyness,
And ready for a joke;
Houses hold their arms to you,
Windows wink and grin,
And the ever-open doors
Cry: 'Come in! Come in!'*

*Folks who live in Haverton
Are lean and long of face;
Doors are shut, and cupboards, too,
Nothing out of place;
Hands are empty, hearts are hard,
Homes are bleak and chill—
'Go away!' they seem to say,
'Keep out!' And so I will!*

ELIZABETH FLEMING.



The Lambing-Shepherd

ROBERT STEVENSON

WHAT is a lambing-shepherd? He is the man employed to assist the regular shepherd during the stress and strain of extra work at lambing-time. What is his job? Well, roughly speaking, lambing can be divided into inbye lambing and outbye lambing. The inbye lambing is that of low-ground sheep, such as Suffolk, Dorset Horns, or half-breds. These breeds are softer than the hill sheep of the outbye lambing and consequently require much more attention.

I worked for two years as a low-ground lambing-shepherd, and we did a day and a night at a stretch—one night's rest in two with a thirty-six-hour 'day,' except for perhaps an hour's sleep at odd times. Yet after four weeks of this I felt as fit as ever in my life.

The flock I was helping with were North Country Cheviots. All the ewes due to lamb were kept in a big field. At night they were herded into the lambing-pen and the shepherd, or lambing-shepherd, kept watch over them throughout the night, sitting in the lambing-hut, a primitive caravan which smelt predominantly, and very strongly, of terebene balsam.

My job during the night was to go out every hour to look over the flock. If any ewe was labouring, I kept an eye on her, giving a helping hand when necessary. When the

lambs were born, the ewe was penned up with them in the little pens which surrounded the big lambing-pen or bucht. This was to ensure that the lambs got a drink, and that they became thoroughly accustomed to their mother and the mother to her lambs. Another reason for penning the ewe and lambs was that other ewes, yet to lamb, would often steal a lamb from its own mother as the helpless little thing searched for some nourishment. If this happened, especially if two or three ewes lambed at once, it became very difficult to return each lamb to its own mother. In fact, when it was returned, its mother would sometimes have nothing to do with it.

Our job through the day was firstly to let the ewes out into the field again and feed them with turnips and hay. Then all the twin lambs had to be 'keeled'—that is, marked with ochre similarly but distinctly from all the other twins. A red dot on the left hip would be the mark for one pair, on the right hip for another pair, left shoulder, right shoulder, and so on. On one occasion I ran out of marks and decorated my last pair of lambs with a red saddle and bridle. This marking was done so that, should one lamb stray from its mother, as they often do, the shepherd could catch it and hunt round the field till he found another lamb similarly

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marked, thus ensuring that both lambs were near their mother as night drew on.

The rest of our daily work consisted of shifting sheep from one field to another. We had four fields as well as a hill outrun. Day-old lambs were in the first field, two-day-olds in the second field, and so on, until by the fifth day, when the lambs were quite strong and the ewes had plenty of milk, they were allowed back on to the hill.

Yes, I envy the lambing-shepherd his lot. Those were happy days and nights I spent among the ewes. The nights I remember most vividly are those when I wandered in and out among the sleeping ewes, their fast breathing raising a cloud of steam in the frosty night air. No other sound stirred the stillness of the night save the plaintive bleat of a newly-born lamb or the bark of a fox as he hunted for food for his cubs. In the distance, among the low hills of the Lammermuirs, I could sometimes count as many as five little dots of light as our neighbouring shepherds or lambing-shepherds went about their task.

THREE further years I worked as lambing-shepherd on a hill-farm among Blackfaced sheep—an outbye lambing in Peeblesshire. The wild roaming nature of these sheep makes it impossible and, indeed, highly inadvisable to pen them at night. I was in charge of four hundred ewes and it would have been quite a feat to have rounded up each one over the thousand acres of the hirsle. On this farm the regular shepherd worked along one side of the big burn and I along the other.

I would rise at five-thirty in the morning and have a cup of tea and give my dog a feed. To try working sheep on a hill is quite impossible without a dog. My dog Tweed had lived with me in Edinburgh since he was six weeks old, yet when at six years old I took him lambing with me he worked to perfection, as though he had been trained to the job all his life. Such is the high degree of intelligence of the Border collie.

My morning patrol was right round the boundary of the hirsle, a distance of some ten miles. My aim was to drive the ewes from the hilltops, where they generally spent the night, down to the valleys for grazing. Many ewes lambed behind the stone dykes of the boundary, even in the same spot where they themselves had been born. Anything which required attention, such as a ewe with

a dead lamb, was left on the hilltop for attention during the forenoon. All newborn lambs were caught, inoculated for lamb dysentery, and marked on the head to show that they had been so inoculated. In fact, their keel-mark served to show at a glance that the lamb had been noted and that the ewe had plenty of milk and, in short, that all was well. During the forenoon and afternoon patrols any lamb without a mark could be readily detected.

Newborn lambs were relatively easy to catch with my long crook, but ewes were more difficult. However, I had only to point out the ewe I wanted to Tweed and he had his own methods of catching. If the ewe broke away from us, Tweed would run after her, throw himself in front of her, tumbling her up, then sit with his paws on her head till I came up with him. Ewes were sometimes a problem for him, but he managed strong lambs easily in this way. Sometimes he would sit with only one paw on the lamb's head, holding it down till I came along, and looking up at me with such proud brown eyes.

After a three-or-four-hour walk or climb I was more than ready for the bacon-and-egg breakfast which the shepherd's wife would have waiting. Never have I tasted such wonderful fat, crisp, salty bacon, cured by the shepherd from his own pig. Porridge and cream preceded the bacon, and bannocks and home-made butter helped to fill in odd corners.

Although I got soaked sometimes twice or three times a day—I didn't wear a coat, because it hampered me in climbing the steep hillsides—never did I have so much as a sneeze. Fresh air, plenty of exercise, and good wholesome food kept me fit. I must have walked or climbed some thirty miles a day during my five weeks lambing on this farm, and never have I felt fitter.

BREAKFAST over, the next job was to assist any ewe or lamb which had been noted earlier in the morning. Perhaps one ewe would have one dead lamb, while another would have two lambs but only enough milk for one. The shepherd's job was to skin the dead lamb and put the skin on one of the two lambs. Theoretically, the first ewe would think that the dressed-up lamb was hers and the net result would be that instead of two ewes, one with no lamb and one with two, there would be two ewes each with one lamb.

THE LAMBING-SHEPHERD

It did not always work out that way, however, and the ewe that had had the dead lamb sometimes took quite a bit of persuading that the dressed-up lamb was indeed her offspring. Such ewes were penned up in the circular stone bucht far away in the middle of the hills and the shepherd might have to hold her for a long time until she would let the lamb suck.

At lambing-time shepherds carry a bag over their shoulder. This serves two purposes. In the first place, it holds shears, keel or ochre, antiseptic, and feeding-bottle and teat, and, if necessary, serum for dysentery, and, possibly M. & B. tablets. Its second purpose is to carry any weak or orphan lambs while they are borne back to the house to lie in front of the fire. In a bad year of snow it is really distressing to see the helpless little creatures staggering about weak from want of the milk their mothers cannot give them. In such years the shepherd must work unceasingly carrying half-frozen lambs to his house to get thawed out and fed on cow's milk.

IT was generally after dinner that we fed these 'pet' lambs, milked the cow, fed the pig, cut wood, or perhaps drove hay out to the ewes.

One afternoon a funny thing happened to me. I was driving hay far, far out on the hillside to some ewes. Snow lay on the ground and the horse's feet, unnoticed by me, got caked up with balls of snow. As I was driving him up a particularly steep part of the hill all four feet slipped from beneath him and down he went, the cart turning upside down. I was well out of sight of the cottage and, as I thought, no human being was within miles of me. Quickly I rushed to the horse's head and sat on it, all the while trying to quieten him, but not quite knowing what to do next as I could not lift the cart by myself, nor could I go for help.

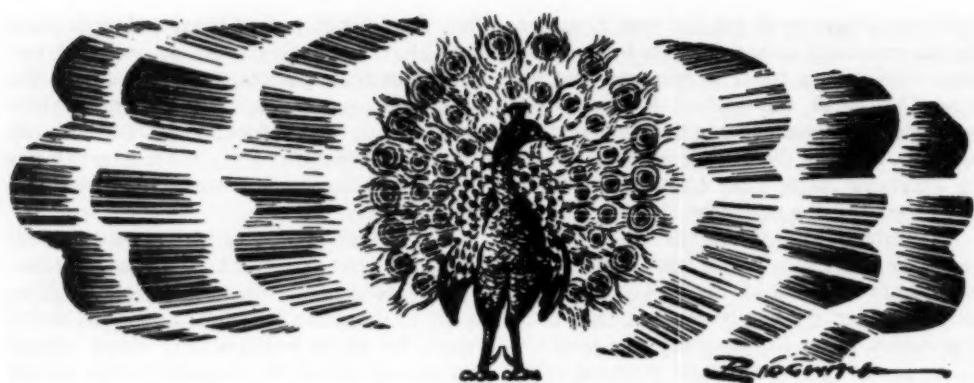
Well, within ten minutes I had six men round me. The bleak hillsides had appeared devoid of human life, yet six pairs of eyes had seen my plight and six people had come rushing to my aid. Three were neighbouring shepherds on their afternoon patrol and three had been working in a field screened by a wood. These three had not actually seen the horse

fall, but their dogs had seen, and, with their ears alert, their eyes fixed on me, and low growls in their throats, they had drawn the men's attention to me. The horse was unhurt and soon we were on our way. But it made me think. I was doing my best to help helpless lambs and so, it seemed, was Providence helping me.

On another afternoon I chanced to climb up to the crest of a low hill and saw in front of me about eight mountain-hares. Calling softly to Tweed to lie down, I watched, fascinated, for about half-an-hour. They played tig as any crowd of school-children would play. One hare was in the centre of the ring. One of the ring would dash into the centre and touch him, then the central one would chase him in and out and round about, and, when caught or touched, this hare took his place in the centre of the ring. It was most amusing. Had anyone told me, I would not have believed it, but I watched for some time to convince myself that the game was clearly organised. The time was the end of March, and for all I know this may be a well-recognised mating game, but I only record the facts as I saw them.

THE third and last round of the day was made along the valleys, driving the ewes and lambs gently uphill to their sleeping-places on top, where it is drier, all the while keeping an eye and ear open for ewes or lambs in distress. A hungry lamb separated from its mother is indeed a pathetic plaintive object. A lamb stuck in a drain would similarly draw attention to itself, and a ewe lying on her back would have to be helped to her feet.

But oh the wonderful peace and beauty of those evenings in the hills! The golden sunset of a calm evening, young tender green shoots of bracken contrasting sharply with the black of burnt heather, and, pervading all, the deep baa of the ewes calling their erring offspring, gambolling happily in droves of ten or twenty and softly bleating in return, the curlew, cuckoo, and the lark adding their music to the pastoral. The lot of the lambing-shepherd is hard, but his rewards indeed are rich.



Satan-Worshippers

A Unique Religious Sect in Iraq

W. ROBERT FORAN

'I have always felt friendly towards Satan.
Of course, that is ancestral.'

Mark Twain, *Autobiography*.

THE bulk of the population of Iraq consists of Arabs, but there are also minorities of ancient races—the inevitable backwash of many conquests during past centuries. A natural consequence is a marked diversity of religions practised. No other community, however, is quite like the Yazidis of Upper Iraq, and no creed is in any way similar to that which they follow. They are Satan-worshippers. Their form of religion must be unique.

The Yazidis inhabit the Jabal Sinjar range, situated sixty miles to the south-west of Mosul, and mountain villages to the north of that town, but some can also be found living as far from their normal centre as Aleppo and Tiflis. It is doubtful if at the present time they number more than 36,000 in Iraq. These peculiar people are generally regarded as a tribe of Arabs, but the accuracy of this view is open to strong doubt. Anthropologists know no more about the true genesis of the Yazidis than do students of comparative religions: none knows their real origin, race, or from where this strange creed

derived. These people are illiterate and have no written records of their past history. They have no affinities with the Arabs in habits, customs, dress, religion, laws, or appearance. It is conceivable that they migrated originally from Turkestan, Armenia, Georgia, the Caspian Sea regions or still farther north, to settle permanently in Iraq. Nobody knows whence they came.

THE Yazidis' creed is an extraordinary hotchpotch of Satan-worship, Zoroastrianism, Mithraism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islamism. The devotees propitiate Satan with prayers and offerings, because they regard him as a supernatural being ruling the earth with the approval of God and believe that God is far too remote a Supreme Being for direct worship. Satan, according to them, is one of seven spirits created by God, the others being the sun, moon, stars, earth, water, and air. They insist that Satan was expelled from Heaven for rebelling against God, but that he eventually repented, was pardoned, and given supreme command over the Angels. The Yazidis say that God leased the world to Satan for 10,000 years, of which

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period there still remain 4000 years to complete.

So much in awe of Satan are the Yazidis that they never speak his name or utter any word beginning with a sibilant 'sh,' as in *Shaitan* (Devil). They do not regard Satan as a spirit of evil, but as the spirit of power. They worship him through an image (*sanjar*) called *Melek Teus* (Peacock Angel), the most secret object of their ritual. The *Melek Teus* has probably never been seen by an unbeliever, though the Yazidis are willing enough to exhibit their temple and saint's shrine at Sheikh Adi on the Jabal Sinjar. But *Melek Teus* is taboo.

The religion is composite. The conception of good and evil principles, and also the belief in the transmigration of souls, come down from Zoroastrianism. The triannual sacrifice of a white bull at the Temple of the Black Serpent is connected with Mithraism of antiquity. The identification of Ahriman, the principle of Evil, with Satan is taken from Judaism; and the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Koran are equally revered. The Yazidis venerate Jesus Christ (*Melek Isa*), but rank him after Satan. On the walls of the Temple of the Black Serpent at Sheikh Adi appear representations of the other spirits created by the Supreme Being; and beside the entrance stands a large carved stone image of the Black Serpent, possibly the symbol of wisdom.

The Yazidis have original ideas about Biblical legends. For instance, they maintain that two Floods occurred, and that, as the waters rose during the second one, the Ark floated on to the Jabal Sinjar and there was badly holed by a jagged rock. When the Ark was in imminent danger of sinking, a serpent blocked the rent with its body until the Flood subsided. By thus saving the lives of all on the Ark, the serpent performed a notable service to mankind; consequently the Yazidis treat the serpent as a deity. A Yazidi merchant at Mosul assured me that they do not associate the serpent with Satan, rating it in their ritual as inferior to the Peacock Angel—that is to say, to Satan.

Worship of the Peacock Angel is the most prominent feature of the Yazidis' peculiar religion. There are said to be seven of these bronze images—one kept permanently at the temple of Sheikh Adi; the others carried on periodical circuits of the villages by men styled *qawwals*, the fourth caste in the Yazidi

hierarchy. When these peacock images are exhibited in the villages they are not only worshipped; they also produce revenue. Authority to carry them from place to place, therefore, is a matter of material importance and is entrusted solely to men absolutely reliable to receive funds donated by the villagers.

These strange people have their internal troubles. Dissension arises in regard to succession as Mir, the ruler and spiritual leader. Heated controversy has also been occasioned about the control, collection, and disposal of funds given for the upkeep of the temple and saint's shrine at Sheikh Adi. The ruling Mir was not always above suspicion of misappropriation and questionable distribution of these funds; but now the matter has been settled by election of a Spiritual Council to control all pious foundation funds and the Mir is forced to adopt more democratic practices than in the past.

Due to constant persecutions throughout the centuries, particularly by the Turks, from 1534 to 1918, the Yazidis are very shy and seldom leave their mountain villages. The majority inhabit the Jabal Sinjar, sixty miles, as has been said above, to the southwest of Mosul. Sheikh Adi is roughly midway between Mosul and Dair-az-Zaur, the latter a large and important town on the right bank of the Euphrates. The Jabal Sinjar range, comprising Jabal Sinjar and Jabal Junibah, straddles from north to south the road between Mosul and Dair-az-Zaur. The hills are the preserve of the Yazidis, their villages being scattered over them.

Sheikh Adi is the religious focal point of these people. The chief temple and venerated shrine of their satan, who died about the middle of the 12th century, are situated at the village. It seems clear, therefore, that the Yazidis were settled in Iraq before even the conquest of the country by the Turks in 1534—at least three centuries earlier, and probably more than that. The village is small and insignificant. Normally, it is occupied by the priests serving the Temple of the Black Serpent and safeguarding the saint's shrine. The Yazidis only visit Sheikh Adi on festival occasions, staged at four-monthly intervals in each year and lasting for three to seven days.

THE Yazidi merchant at Mosul told me that a festival would be in progress during

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the following week and that he was making a pilgrimage then to Sheikh Adi. He suggested that I might care to motor him there and back. I promptly accepted. We took the northerly route through Balad Sinjar and Sakanik, thence over the Shillu Pass between Jabal Sinjar and Jabal Junibah, and then westwards along the northern face of the hills to Sheikh Adi. This is the most popular road between Mosul and Dair-az-Zaur.

During the drive my companion told me much about the Yazidis—a non-martial, peace-loving, and subservient people. As already mentioned, the ruler and spiritual leader is styled Mir. There is also a Mir of Hundian in Iran, eighty miles east of Mohammerah; but I know of no other in either country. Mir is a Russian word, literally meaning 'a village community.' The Mir can do no wrong. His authority is absolute and none dares to disobey him on any pretext. He enjoys the power of life and death over his people and governs without consulting the advice of the Council of Elders. Not only is he the law-maker—he is the law. The Mir can exercise *droit de seigneur*, which is never challenged, but how often the right is used is a matter for speculation. The Yazidis are monogamous, and polygamy is not permissible, as amongst Moslems.

Succession to Mirship is hereditary. Yet the legal heir is allowed to establish himself as Mir by assassinating the holder of that high office, irrespective of relationship. If this treacherous act is successful, the murderer is accepted automatically as the new Mir and without protests from the people. Failure is ever punished by barbaric tortures and then death. No margin of error is allowed. The reigning Mir maintains a keen watch upon all the activities of his legal heir, who must perforce behave himself circumspectly or suffer the severe consequences of plotting.

Sheikh Adi clings to the wooded mountain-side. Small streams, the water brackish or sulphurous, flow down the face of Jabal Sinjar to the desert plains at the base. Normally the village is tenanted solely by a handful of aesthetic priests dwelling in a sun-drenched silence. Now it was thronged with villagers come to participate in the festival. Sheikh Adi was crowded far beyond capacity, an unusual liveliness was perceptible, much noise and activity and gay laughter was heard on all sides. Every available nook inside, and all open spaces outside, the

village were packed tight with booths displaying various wares for sale. The general atmosphere prevailing was that of a village fair. Religious festivals in the East are never staged without an accompaniment of noise, laughter, dancing, and shrewd chaffering over business.

On our arrival the Mir greeted us cordially and invited me to be his honoured guest during our stay at Sheikh Adi. He was a tall and handsome man, powerful of build, with lack-lustre eyes, slim and artistic hands, and a silky black beard terminating in a cork-screw curl. I do not know how he attained office, but he did not look like a man who would commit patricide or fratricide to gain his ambitions. Appearances might have been deceptive, of course.

'Where do you come from?' he asked politely in Arabic.

'Mosul. How is your health?' I replied in his own speech.

'I am very well. Are you English?'

'I am English,' I assured him. Instantly his face lighted with pleasure. Obviously the English were held in high esteem by him. Thereafter, conversation languished. He knew no English and my command of Arabic was limited, while the Mosul merchant proved an indifferent interpreter.

IN due course the Mir conducted me ceremoniously along the path leading from the village to the temple hacked out of the hill-side high up on Jabal Sinjar. We ascended a steep and rock-strewn path to the temple's main entrance. Picturesque Yazidis lined both sides of the route—men clapping hands in the boneless manner peculiar to Orientals; women and girls intoning a high-pitched and flute-like chant, long sustained on a single note. The skin coloration varied amazingly. Some were quite fair, almost like the Scandinavians; others swarthy or very dark-skinned. Patently, intermarriage with other peoples had left its mark upon the present generation. How else could these variations be accounted for?

Many of the children had coal-black hair liberally dyed with henna, so that it flamed out a deep Titian red with rather startling effect. Wide blue eyes stared fearlessly into mine from under fluffy and bobbed hair with a straight-cut fringe bordering an embroidered white skullcap. One lad removed his cap to

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scratch vigorously at an itching scalp and the top of his head was seen to be shaved as bald as an ostrich-egg. The monk-like tonsure was edged with a ragged fringe of hair, the skullcap exactly fitting over the bald patch.

The males mostly affected white and baggy Kurdish pantaloons and a white cotton shirt tightly buttoned at the neck. It is a matter of personal pride amongst all Yazidi men to vie with each other in wearing spotlessly white garments. Shirts are always fastened at the neck because the Yazidis believe that a seductive houri will be detailed to loosen the neckband in the next world, so they are not minded to anticipate in their lifetime such a thrilling experience by rendering this service superfluous in Paradise. Both sexes dress the long hair in from six to eight plaits, all terminating in bright-coloured woollen tassels. Some were blondes; others almost jet-black; and still others too henna-dyed for the original colour to be determinable.

The Mir's young daughter wore a large and ornate belt in honour of the gala occasion. These belts are worn only by unmarried girls. They are of stiffened but somewhat shabby velvet, fastened by two enormous chased-silver clasps, each about six inches long, four inches wide, and studded liberally with uncut gems. The women as a whole wore a white cotton shirt, a full-swinging and ankle-length skirt of brightly-coloured material, and a velvet Zouave-pattern waist-coat of vivid hues, lavishly bedecked with metal braiding. The headdress was the crowning glory, gold and silver coins overlapping to fashion an attractive skullcap. The effect was most pleasing. A scarf, with long-fringed edges, was twisted loosely around the neck and draped artistically over the shoulders. Between the two strands peeped a bright circlet of jangling coins. Some girls favoured filigree earrings studded with uncut gems; fingers, wrists, and arms heavily loaded with rings and bracelets; and ankles bound with attractive anklets of gold or silver, some bejewelled.

The far wall within the Temple of the Black Serpent was lost to view because of the deep and lofty gloom pervading the interior. The main chamber was bare, save for a square sunken bath holding holy water; the roof was supported by large central pillars of rock; and along the walls many niches housed queer saucers of oil in which floated lighted wicks. These lamps provided the sole illumination,

except for crude and fitfully-burning tapers borne aloft by the priests on duty. Such feeble flickers of light scarcely penetrated the dense gloom of the temple.

A narrow passageway gave access to the venerated tomb of Sheikh Adi, which was covered with faded and shabby cloths of red or green colour. The Yazidi merchant told me that there were some wonderful carvings on the saint's tomb, but I had to accept his word for this as they would not allow me to view them. Beyond this sarcophagus was a dark cavern, hollowed out of the rock-face, lined with immense and age-blackened jars containing oil supplies for the replenishing of the temple's lamps. It looked as if the lamps need never have any fear of becoming non-operative for lack of oil to burn, but where this generous reserve is obtained I was not able to discover.

At the far end of the vault I was shown a few camel-hair robes, which, according to the Mir, were the actual vestments worn by the saint during his lifetime. This did not seem even remotely possible, and I suspect them not to be genuine relics. Camel-hair cloth thus left unprotected could scarcely have retained such an excellent state of preservation during the passage of eight centuries. The Yazidis, however, accepted the claim and paid the garments utmost reverence, refusing to believe they might be defrauded by the priests of the temple.

DANCING and frivolity followed the visit to the temple. As the sun blazed down upon the Jabal Sinjar, there was shortly staged an animated scene beneath a sacred mulberry-tree standing outside the village. For several days in succession, almost without pause during daylight hours, and seemingly without experiencing either fatigue or satiation, the Yazidis shuffled through their national dance-steps.

About fifty or more dancers took their places in a close circle formed about a humble band, comprising two drums and a flute, the only musical accompaniment. After an initial show of mock or real shyness had evaporated, a number of young girls also pushed their way unceremoniously here and there into the circle to swell its proportions. They linked arms and shuffled feet in time to the music. A handful of experts in the ring's centre spun and dipped madly, whirled or

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pirouetted to their heart's content, and thereby encouraged the other dancers in the circle to carry on tirelessly. These experts were patently envied and admired by both sexes of dancers: no less so by the entranced spectators forming the outer fringe of the arena. The applause of the onlookers was continuous and evinced genuine enthusiasm.

The footwork of the dancers was intricate. Occasionally a massed flash of white showed all arms lunging into the centre of the ring for a fleeting instant; and then the white-sleeved arms were withdrawn to be lost to view again behind swaying bodies. The timing to the modest band's accompaniment was perfection. The essence and patterns of the rhythm, however, eluded my interpretation, but the nearest approach coming under personal observation during many years of travelling about the world was the dancing of the Lisu people in the Fort Hertz district along the north-eastern frontier of Burma. The Lisu perform with the true spirit of the grim mountains which are their homes. The Yazidis are also hill-people. I can only liken the dances seen at Sheikh Adi to our own old-fashioned 'Nuts in May' performance. Any difference between them was only of a minor character.

At the setting of the sun, the dancing ended for that day. It would be resumed each day until the festival at the Temple of the Black Serpent concluded; and then, four months later, the performers would once again occupy the stage. Now a white, patient, and un-

suspecting bull was led around the base of a fluted white altar and thereon sacrificed with sacerdotal ceremonial to Satan, the god of these peculiar people. This, indubitably, was a reversion to Mithraism.

Immediately following the conclusion of this ritualistic ceremony, the pilgrims started to carry their simple offerings of wood and oil in to the Temple of the Black Serpent. Previous to stepping over the sacred threshold, all devoutly kissed the image of the serpent standing beside the entrance to this gloomy cavern in the hillside. I did not follow them into the temple, as the Mosul merchant whispered that this might occasion resentment amongst the Satan-worshippers. So what was done there I know not.

All that was witnessed at Sheikh Adi was totally unlike anything seen elsewhere in Iraq, or, for that matter, in any other part of the world. The Yazidis alone worship Satan. They, far more than any of the heterogeneous races in Iraq, seem doomed to disappear, as their numbers are rapidly decreasing and they are not a prolific people.

It would be a great pity if, before the final eclipse of this picturesque community around Mosul, no definite knowledge could be secured about their true origin, actual race, and the genesis of their strange religious cult. One day, perhaps, someone will be moved to undertake this difficult investigation. Time is becoming short. Soon it will be too late to lift the veil of mystery surrounding these unusual people.

Early Spring

*This morning's rain has muddled the last of winter's snow.
Can spring be in the offing with still a month to go?
They say that seasons vanish when love holds hearts in thrall;
Must be that last night's kisses have caught the answering call,*

*For I have held the sweetness of rosebud to my breast,
And watched the softened eye-flash by my own eyes caressed;
And I have sensed a newness go whirring in the air
As lips dissolved the darkness, and swept my soul from care.*

*The hawthorn hedge is budding with tiny wisps of green,
But only in my mind's eye can season's change be seen.
The music of a bird song dwells in my ears to-day.
Can spring be here already, and summer on its way?*

W. McDermott.



Henry the Bull

MICHAEL BROWN

AS soon as I looked into Henry's eyes I thought of trouble ahead. He put his head down and scraped his horns across his wooden crate, and his horns were a good two feet long and they curved out and upwards, ending in sharp points—sharp enough to tear the clothes off your back and still go deeper if he got near enough to you. As soon as I saw that look in his eyes I made sure he wouldn't get near enough.

'Och, he'll be no trouble at all,' said Mac.

Mac was a tall, thin Scotsman, so thin you couldn't believe he had twenty-six feet of intestine tucked behind his belt. But he was wiry, with thin hairy wrists and big, long-fingered hands. He was the cattleman, and he was a gentle, fearless, lovable man. He had charge of Henry the bull and five in-calf heifers, and he had to look after them all the way out to New Zealand.

On fine days when the sea was calm Mac would take Henry out of his box and walk him around the after well-deck. You never saw anyone else out on deck then. He would march Henry up and down the deck holding him by a rope attached to his nose and he would talk to Henry all the time.

Mac used to exercise the heifers too. They were lovely beasts and tame. You could lean

over their crates and they let you scratch them behind their ears. When Mac walked them, one at a time, along the deck Henry would watch anxiously from his box, and after a bit, when the strain became too great for him, he would start bellowing. It was a curious noise, starting low and drawing out into a sharp, high-pitched groan, and you could tell as plain as words what Henry was saying to those heifers. But they just ignored him and looked the other way, stepping daintily like Victorian misses on the promenade. He would call louder and louder, and finally you'd look at him expecting to see the tears running down his cheeks, so agonised was his voice. Then he'd give up and start working on the sides of his box with his horns. You could hear the wood creaking and chips splitting off, and you wondered if he might not one day just get through the side—one day when he was especially lonely, that is. But Mac had a wonderful way with him and Henry was as placid as a Buddha when Mac spoke to him.

WE had fine weather all the way across to Panama, through the Canal and half-way across the Pacific, and then it got rough. We ran into one of those storms you some-

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times hit in the Pacific. A wild, galing wind and really big seas, so that the ship was all over the place. It lasted for six days and all through it was very warm and the air was heavy and wet.

I had asked Mac what he would do in rough weather. 'Och,' he said, 'we'll get through, as long as the crates don't get washed overboard.'

'You won't be able to take them for walks,' I said.

'Well, I'll walk them round inside their boxes.'

'What, Henry as well?'

'Yes. I told you, he's as quiet as a lamb.'

'Rather you than me, Mac,' I said.

The fifth day of the storm was the worst. I was up on the bridge at breakfast-time on watch. The seas were big and breaking clumsily. It wasn't bad enough to make us alter course, but I had to keep an eye on the helmsman constantly in case he allowed the ship to swing round just enough to let a wave catch us on the beam.

I went into the chartroom for a few minutes to write in the logbook. Then I felt us heeling over a bit more than usual and I nipped outside smartly. Sure enough, the ship had swung round, and as I spoke to the helmsman sharply a great, vicious overhanging cliff of sea smacked us all over amidships. The water poured across the boat-deck, taking two life-boats with it. There didn't seem to be any other damage that I could see from the bridge. The water cleared away and, apart from the two missing lifeboats, everything looked secure.

Then Mac shot up the bridge-ladder. 'The Mate up here?' he said.

I could see he was excited and nervous about something. 'No. What's wrong, Mac?' I asked him.

'That bloody great sea came over and knocked half the bull's crate in.'

I had forgotten about Henry being on the windward side. 'Is he still inside it?' I inquired.

'Only just, man. I must get the Mate,' and he disappeared down the ladder.

About ten minutes later the Mate came up to the bridge. 'Henry's crate is smashed in,' he said. 'I want you to go along aft and help. The carpenter's down there.'

I wasn't very pleased about this. I'd kept clear of Henry so far on the trip and I didn't want to go near him now. However, there

was nothing I could do except go aft and see what was happening.

THE ship was pitching and rolling in sharp, jerky motions. You couldn't walk along the deck in a straight line, but you went forward in a series of curves as the ship heeled from side to side. Down on the after well-deck it was a bit sheltered from the wind, but an occasional wave slapped against the side of the ship and sent a deluge of water over us. Mac and Des, the carpenter, were looking at the bull's crate. It had been pushed about ten feet along the deck and one whole side of it, the one nearest the rails, had been bashed in. Henry was inside all right, but it wouldn't need much effort on his part, if he were frightened, say, to get out of it.

'What do you think of it, Des?' I asked.

'I can shore up the side O.K., but I've got to do it from inside the crate.' Des didn't like Henry.

I could see into the busted crate, and I saw Henry bunched up in a corner with his head down. You couldn't tell whether he was calm and collected or fighting mad and ready to eat the first man that stepped inside. 'How are we going to do it, Mac?' I inquired.

Mac said: 'I'll hold him whilst Des is working. He'll be quiet.'

I could tell that Des wasn't very happy about it, but the job had to be done, and Des was the only man to do it. 'I'll help you, Des,' I said, in a fit of confidence.

Des fetched his tools and some lengths of timber.

'Wait until I've got hold of him,' said Mac. He opened the door and went inside carrying a stick with a hook on the end of it.

Des and I watched through the top half of the door. Mac crept across the floor of the crate, talking softly all the time, but Henry stayed bunched up in the corner and did not move. Mac was trying to get the hook on the end of his stick through the ring in Henry's nose. Henry had his head down with his nose in the straw. Every time Mac put out the hook he moved his nose deeper into the straw and we could see his eyes looking up, and there was a wicked look about them. Then it happened.

Des and I were so intent on watching Mac that we had not bothered about the ship. The first thing we knew about it was when the wave struck. It must have been every bit

HENRY THE BULL

as big as the first one that came over. It struck the crate like a giant sledge-hammer and we saw the side that was already broken shatter entirely and water pour into the crate.

As the wave struck, Henry gave a bellow and rushed forward at Mac, who leaped aside with a shout. Henry came right on to us at the door, and then the crate suddenly moved forward as well and knocked Des and I flying. I fell down beside the hatchway and the water covered me right over and washed into the scupper. I grabbed hold of the rails and stood up—and there right in front of me was Henry.

I SHOULD think we looked into each other's eyes for about ten seconds, and then I panicked. I screamed out something and dashed for the nearest cover, which was a big cargo-winches, and got behind it. The water had knocked all the air out of me and I just stuck there gasping for breath, unable to say a word.

Mac and Des were safe. They were upstanding at the other end of the cargo-hatch. The three of us stood and watched Henry. He hadn't moved. He just stayed stock-still, as though it was too good to be true—that he was out of his crate and free as the air at last.

Then the ship lifted to a wave and lurched sharply over and Henry lost his balance and slithered across the deck. He started bellowing and his tail lashed round. He was frightened, and he might do anything.

Suddenly the five heifers all started up together, crying out in short, harsh bellows. The noise was tremendous. Henry listened for a moment, and then galloped over the deck towards the heifers' crates. His speed was incredible. He leaped on to the hatch-cover and was halfway across it when the ship gave another abrupt lurch and Henry went flying.

He shot off the hatch and landed on the

steel deck with a great thud. He tried to scramble to his feet, but he couldn't stand up. He was hurt, and it was pitiful to watch him. A great ungainly mass, he slid around in a circle, half up and half down, and he moaned in obvious pain. He crashed into a winch and it slewed him round and he slammed hard up against the side of one of the heifer's crates. Then he stopped and lay there.

Mac leaped over the hatch and ran up to Henry and knelt beside him. I went over and Mac looked up and said: 'Both his back legs broken. I'll have to shoot him.' He went off up to the bridge to fetch the Captain's gun.

The heifers stopped bellowing and there was a sudden silence, except for the wind howling across the ship.

I knelt down beside Henry. He was lowing softly. It was a beautiful sound, full of surprise, confusion, pain, fear, and perplexity. His eyes were wide open, the pupils tremendous black rounds. I realised for the first time how good he looked; there was no meanness here. He seemed, strangely, almost gentle, and somehow proud and noble.

Then Mac came back with the Captain's gun and shot Henry carefully three times through the brain. We stood up and looked at each other. The tears were running down Mac's face, and I knew just what he was feeling. 'I must take the gun back,' he muttered, and went away.

As soon as he had gone, I gathered a few seamen together to help me. We removed one of the rails and then we rolled Henry over across the deck until he dropped over the side. We watched him floating astern. He kept popping up into view on top of the waves, and I thought he would never disappear. But he did eventually.

Mac was very quiet after this. But when we were two days out from Wellington one of the heifers produced a calf. It was a bull, and the spit-image of Henry. Mac was delighted.

Good-bye

*Only a withered leaf
Falls on the grass.
One instant. Yet observe
Centuries pass.*

*Between the Is and Was,
This great divide—
Æons, dear heart, since you
Stood by my side.*

M. FERRETT.



Pilgrimage to Goa

The Last Exposition of St Francis Xavier

ISOBEL SWEENEY

IN Goa, Portuguese India, at the beginning of December 1952 it seemed that the 20th century had still to come and that life had been transported back to the mediæval era, an era of pomp and circumstance, of procession and pageantry, an era when the splendour of the Roman Catholic Church was at its peak; the title 'Rome of the East' seemed especially applicable to Goa. The occasion was, of course, the last exposition of St Francis Xavier, the patron saint of the East, who had died exactly four hundred years before, on 2nd December 1552, and whose mortal remains are still in a remarkable state of preservation. To see these mortal remains thousands of pilgrims flocked to Goa, or Old Goa, and, 5 miles W., in the little town of Panjim, or New Goa, the capital of the territory of Goa, the streets were thronged with unaccustomed crowds who had come from every part of the world to kiss the saint's feet.

FRANCIS XAVIER, who was the son of a Basque nobleman, was born in 1506, and came as a missionary to Goa in 1542, thirty-two years after it had been conquered by the Portuguese under Albuquerque. The town

was built by the Mohammedans on the foundations of an ancient Hindu city, of which no traces remain. After it became a Portuguese colony its character quickly changed and to-day the architecture shows strong evidence of Portuguese occupation. When St Francis came to Goa in 1542 there already existed an outpost of the Catholic Church, which, due to his efforts, was to increase rapidly in numbers. That he was a man of character and individuality is demonstrated by the fact that one of his first tasks on reaching Goa was to write to the Pope denouncing the corruption of the Goan Church. In his life he kept near to the Christian virtues of humility, poverty, and simplicity; an outstanding example was that on his arrival in Goa from Lisbon he refused to be carried to the Archbishop's Palace in a palanquin but walked barefoot and clad in a tattered gown. He was responsible for countless mass conversions and we are told that he performed many miracles; his efforts were mainly directed towards the poor and the sick.

From Goa he went to Japan in 1549, but soon returned; in 1552 he again set out, this time for China, and on the way he died on the lonely island of Changchuen, Sancian, or

PILGRIMAGE TO GOA

St John, off southern China. He was buried in Malacca by his devoted native servant, who placed the body in a large case of quicklime. After three months it was decreed that the body be reburied, and the followers of the missionary were astounded when they found it in a remarkable state of preservation; it looked, they said, as though Xavier were asleep. From Malacca, two years later, the body was taken to the Church of St Paul in Goa, where the first expositions were held. From 1554 to 1686 (Xavier was canonised in 1622) expositions took place yearly, and from 1782 to 1931 at intervals; there was a temporary exposition in 1950. The right arm and two toes are missing; the right arm was sent to Rome in 1614, where it is in the custody of the Jesuits in the Church of the Gesù, and during the first exposition the big toe of the right foot was bitten off by a noblewoman, Isabel de Carrons, who wanted it as a keepsake. When the right arm was cut off, blood spurted forth, as if from a living body.

DURING the present exposition the most important event was the ceremony of the opening of the coffin, and on the previous day pilgrims were pouring in in an incessant stream and by every available means of transport. Apart from visitors from every part of India, there were many Europeans and Americans, every nationality united, temporarily at least, under a common desire. Catholic clergy had come from every corner of the world, ranging from the chief visitor to the exposition, the Cardinal Legate, His Eminence Manuel Gonsalves Cerejeira, to minor clerics, and including three Archbishops, seventeen Bishops, and members of the various religious orders, most notably Jesuits and Franciscans.

The arrival of the Cardinal Legate and his retinue from Lisbon was an impressive sight. As the boat *Indis* docked at Panjim, the wharf was lined with cheering crowds. Accompanied by the Governor-General and representatives of the civil and military authorities of Goa, His Eminence and his retinue processed to the Church of the Immaculate Conception. It was a scene of colour and splendour, the acclaiming crowds thronging the route to the church packed close together, tense with excitement and expectation, and the procession moving slowly up the hill, at the head, the Cardinal Legate under a panoply, and, behind, the black of the Goan

authorities contrasting with the white of the priests and the purple of the Bishops and Archbishops. The church itself provided a background of pure, gleaming white to the ceremony which followed, the formal installation of Cardinal Cerejeira as the Papal Legate for the exposition.

ON 3rd December the dawn was heralded with music, crackers, and mortar-fire, and at sunrise all the church-bells began to ring in unison. From very early in the morning crowds were streaming along the roads from all around to the Cathedral in Old Goa, where the body was to be taken in procession from the Basilica of Bom Jesus; there, when the body was removed from the Church of St Paul in Old Goa, previous expositions were held.

The Cardinal was expected to arrive at the Basilica at 9.15 a.m., and by 9 a.m. a seething mass of humanity was outside the church, and every vantage-point had been taken up. In the crowd, Franciscan monks, impressive in the simplicity of their brown robes, mingled with the white of the priests, whose lace surplices were works of art in themselves, and the purple of the Bishops. The Portuguese ladies were particularly striking in their black dresses, with black mantillas, and seemed to have stepped out of another world, more gracious and dignified. The onlooker was impressed by the orderliness of the crowd and, when the Cardinal and his retinue arrived, by the expressions of devotion on their faces.

A short ceremony took place inside the Basilica and then six mitred prelates lifted the coffin on to their shoulders and the procession made its way reverently through the silent masses to the Cathedral. Inside the Cathedral, dark in contrast to the bright sunlight of an unusually hot December day, the procession moved slowly to the centre of the church, the urn was placed on a platform, and then came the solemnity about which all the other ceremonies pivoted. The seals were broken and the body of the saint was lifted up and placed in the silver sarcophagus, a gift from a former Duke of Tuscany. Even to the irreligious there could not fail to be something impressive about the sight of this body which had remained preserved, without embalming, for four hundred years; this shrivelled hand and arm must have blessed many of the ancestors of those present, this wrinkled face, impassive

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in death, must have looked upon many of their faces. It was evident from the size of the hand, arm, and head that the body must have shrunk considerably, and a priest who had been present at the previous two expositions said he noticed a great change.

While this ceremony was taking place the force of the crowd at the door became so great that the police were unable to hold them back and the throng began to stream in, not excitedly, not confusedly, but, considering their numbers, in an amazingly orderly fashion. The police at first tried to restrain them with blows, until an order was given to cease and to let the people enter. Several young girls, all dressed in blue, and belonging to a guild of the Church, particularly bore the brunt of the blows, and these a priest ushered to a place from where they could obtain a good view of the proceedings. The crowd streamed in until no more could be accommodated in the vast Cathedral and until about twenty thousand persons were crammed together and every inch of space was utilised. It was an experience in itself to watch the reaction of the assemblage to the ceremony; especially noticeable were several nuns of the Order of St Alexius, dressed simply in blue, who in the midst of the crowd retained an impressive serenity and devotion and seemed to be in a world apart. It was a day

which for those people would be long remembered and the story would be handed down from one generation to another.

LASTLY there came the eagerly awaited broadcast of the Pope from the Vatican, which was heard not only in the Cathedral but also by the many thousands standing outside in the grounds. After the papal blessing had been received, the crowds began slowly to drift outside, as by that time the heat in the packed Cathedral had become unbearable. Not until later in the day would other than privileged persons be allowed to kiss the feet of the saint.

In the ground many booths and stalls had been set up, selling not only food and drink but also relics and pictures of the saint and a variety of articles. The businessmen of Goa had awakened from their habitual lethargy and were making the most of this rare opportunity. As a rule, Goa is a sleepy place, where life is easy-going and time means very little, and only an event like the last exposition of a saint's body could make a change in the tempo of life. When, at the beginning of January, the ceremonies were over and the body was reburied, the pace of things slackened once again, and, with sighs of relief on many sides, peace once more returned to Goa.

Watchdogs of Music

The Performing Right Society of Great Britain

W. MASON-OWEN

'AND now, ladies and gentlemen, the orchestra will continue with—' The millions of listeners who hear this everyday announcement over their radios just settle back in their armchairs to enjoy the music, little realising that the musical item they are

about to hear will not only give pleasure to them, but will also earn money for the copyright-holders and the composer or his heirs. The listener is probably unaware, too, that *he* is paying for the privilege of hearing that particular piece of music, no matter whether

WATCHDOGS OF MUSIC

he prefers opera, military bands, swing music, or concertos.

Knowingly or not, every time you renew your radio licence you contribute a shilling to the ever-vigilant 'Watchdogs of Music.' These shillings—which amount to something like £600,000 a year—are deducted by the B.B.C. from the £1 licence fee, and eventually find their way into the coffers of the Performing Right Society of Great Britain.

The Society, a remarkable non-profit-making organisation, was founded thirty-eight years ago to protect the interests of its 34 original members and their fellow composers and song-writers. Long before the formation of the Society it was legally possible for composers and lyric-writers to collect fees direct for the public performance of their works, but, although they sometimes received a worthwhile fee from music-halls or other places of entertainment, their musical output was considerably hampered by the work entailed in securing their dues.

A number of French composers and librettists, who believed that if music was good enough to listen to it was also worth paying for, formed themselves into a society whose aim was the collection of fees for fellow musicians; they also took it upon themselves to see that their fellow composers and publishers were protected against sharks. This society—formed something like eighty years ago—was the actual forerunner and foundation of the Performing Right Society as it exists to-day. And from the original 34, membership has now increased to over 2600.

Members pay neither entrance fee nor annual subscription, but each member must be prepared to contribute £1 should the Society find itself in financial difficulties. Just because you have written a song, however, that does not mean that you can become a member of the Performing Right Society without further ado. You must have had published at least six musical items which, in the opinion of the Society, are of sufficient merit to warrant your inclusion. It is little wonder, then, that the musical-minded sometimes ask: How does the Performing Right Society work? How does it keep track of the 2,000,000 works on which it keeps an ever-watchful eye? How is the money shared out equally?

EVERY place in which music is diffused to the public must, whether it charges an

admission-fee or not, possess a licence issued by the Society. More than 70,000 British places of entertainment are so licensed, ranging from Ritz hotels, luxury liners, famous music-halls and theatres to soap-factories, garages, church-halls, and village institutes.

Naturally, the cost of a licence varies according to the size of the building and the number of patrons it caters for. Thus, the annual licence for a parish-hall which sponsors an occasional social evening or a Saturday-night dance will cost but a few shillings; a swanky West End hotel, on the other hand, may have to pay £100 or more, especially if it has one or two resident orchestras, gives a floor show, or maintains a fully-engaged ballroom.

By means of a highly-skilled team of 'secret-service agents,' the Performing Right Society keeps an eye on all places which are classed as offering entertainment—cinemas (about 4500 of these); theatres; some 10,000 cafés, restaurants, and milk-bars; dance-halls; factories; hotels; cocktail-lounges; skating-rinks; travelling circuses and fairs; church-halls, and what not. The United Kingdom is split up into different regions, and each has its own travelling inspector, who is specially trained to recognise the works protected by the Society.

When the inspector, who, incidentally, is not allowed to collect fees or issue licences, finds an unlicensed establishment infringing copyright, or a licensee who is giving more performances than his licence allows, he tactfully reminds the proprietor or the licensee of the British Copyright Act of 1911, under which the work of a composer is protected for fifty years after his death, and then sends in his report to Copyright House, the aptly-named London headquarters of the Society.

Every licence-holder must keep an accurate record of the names and frequency of the pieces he offers his patrons. From these records, and the weekly returns from band-leaders, cinema- and theatre-managers, and the B.B.C., the Society knows at any given moment on any day what piece of music or sound-film is entertaining the public in any part of the British Isles, and from this mass of evidence is calculated the amount to which each publisher or composer is entitled.

EACH composition watched over by the Society has a point-rating, allocated according to the length and nature of the work. The

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value of an individual point is infinitesimal, a fraction of a penny, but the total points awarded at the end of the year may easily aggregate almost two hundred millions, which, when turned into sterling value, represents an appreciable sum of money. A battery of electrical calculating-machines totals up all the points obtained by all the members. This is then divided into the net income, the result of which shows the sterling value of each point awarded. Finally, the machines work out the commercial value of each member's point total.

With the popularity of old-time and ballroom dancing, coupled with the new craze for square dancing, you might think that dance tunes represent the music most often played and therefore rate a higher point-value and consequently earn more for their composers than the works of, say, Eric Coates or Haydn Wood. This is not as true as is so popularly believed, for it is the light classical items in the non-dance class which pull in the biggest money in musicland. In October 1950, for instance, just before the expiry of copyright in Gilbert and Sullivan music and librettos, the Performing Right Society were regularly handing over one of their cheques for £1000 or so on account of Gilbert and Sullivan orchestral recordings played publicly in factories, hotels, cinemas, and elsewhere.

Even so, the writers, composers, and publishers of novelty numbers, such as 'Lambeth Walk,' 'Chickery Chick,' 'Chestnut Tree,' and 'Music, Music, Music,' also make a lot of money from their songs. Although Noel Gay's 'Lambeth Walk' was never regarded as a smash hit, almost 750,000 copies of the song, either sheet music or gramophone records, have been sold; another which has sold well over the half-million mark is 'Chestnut Tree.' But these are both exceptions.

At one time the sale of sheet music was tremendous, but since the coming of radio it has slumped badly. In pre-broadcasting days a popular song would easily sell 50,000 copies, and a smash hit anything up to 1,000,000 copies. In those days, if a song failed to sell more than 20,000 copies, it was considered a bad business proposition. To-day, however, the composer and lyric author keep their eyes on what are called in the trade 'mechanical rights.'

But if broadcasting has cut down the sale of sheet music and gramophone records, it has certainly helped to boost the revenue of the Performing Right Society, whose annual income from Britain and affiliated countries has risen to more than £1½ million. The B.B.C. has an agreement with the Society by which it is allowed to broadcast all the music on the Society's books—roughly two-thirds of all music broadcast—for which it pays an annual sum which amounts to something like £275,000. Incidentally, the B.B.C. does not have to pay for any music it uses in religious worship nor for anything that forms part of a school's curriculum; the Society makes no charge for these items.

THE activities of the Performing Right Society are not confined to the British Isles. The Society also watches over the interests of our composers in all parts of the world. Organisations similar to the Performing Right Society of Great Britain have been set up all over the world and are now all affiliated one with another. When British musical items are used in foreign countries, or vice versa, royalties due to the copyright-holders are paid to these affiliated societies, and thence to the man through his own society. Russia is one of the few countries which does not pay out under this scheme. In fact, the Soviet has never subscribed to the international copyright conventions, and therefore pays nothing to foreign composers for the use of their works. Russian composers, however, derive benefit from the scheme. Thus, to take one instance, fees due to the Russian composer Serge Prokofiev, a member of the French Performing Right Society, with which the British Performing Right Society is affiliated, are collected and paid out to the composer regularly every quarter.

The Performing Right Society has much to be proud of and it is highly praised by musicians the world over. In fact, Mr Harold Wilson, when speaking as the President of the Board of Trade, had this to say of the Society: 'The Performing Right Society has followed a policy for the past twenty years which has been, in my view, of the very highest national value.' To this the Society's grateful members will readily add: 'And ours, too.'



Bones

JOHN GODLEY

BONES AGAMEMNON had been one of my father's close friends when they were at Oxford together in the late 'nineties. I often heard my father speak of him, his affection mingled with regret, but I think that I only met him twice, and then only very briefly in London. However, his appearance on these occasions must have impressed me, for I immediately recognised him when to my astonishment I ran into him in Delphi recently.

It was a splendid Saturday morning. The bus from Athens, full to overflowing, came jolting into the village, and pulled up dustily in front of the little café where I was staying. Everyone on board struggled to get off at once, and when I first caught sight of Bones I could see only his head, which was bobbing up and down like a cork on the turbulent stream of his fellow-passengers. But he fought with the best of them, despite his weight of years, and when he reached the safety of the road he sorted himself out from among them, and glanced around anxiously, yet at the same time with complete self-assurance, to pick up his long-remembered bearings.

When he had spotted the café, which is the only one in the village, he paused for a moment

to adjust his glasses, then unslung the nondescript canvas bag which was hanging from a shoulder, and came confidently inside. He sat down at a near-by table without noticing me, called over the only waiter, and ordered his meal in Greek.

I REMEMBERED my father telling me that when old Bones, as he now affectionately called him, was still a young man at Balliol everyone believed that he would discover a brilliant niche for himself somewhere in the University, as a Fellow of his own college or perhaps even as a Fellow of All Souls. I thought as I looked at him that even now, after a lifetime of unimaginative toil, he still might be mistaken for an Oxford don, of that very particular kind—eccentric and wiry, with frizzy black hair, now at last greying, and steel-rimmed spectacles. He stood out at once as an Englishman. His misshapen clothes fell anyhow about him, to accentuate his stoop and his spare figure.

I had thought of him automatically as Bones Agamemnon, but I now remembered with an effort that his real name was Agamemnon Stott. He had been called Bones at Balliol half-a-century before, and had been

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universally known as Bones Agamemnon ever since, or as just plain Bones.

I saw that he had changed little in the years since I had last seen him, though his face, which reflected his sensibility, was now already burnt brown by the Greek sunshine. Indeed, he seemed somehow to have become rejuvenated. I realised that he must be well over seventy, yet he was eager and active as a boy. His blue eyes shone brightly, even mischievously, and his expressive hands, with their large knobbly fingers, were sensitive as well as being strong and useful. He gave me the impression that he was brimming over with repressed excitement. I walked over to his table and when I introduced myself he at once remembered me. He seemed to feel no surprise at our unexpected meeting, but at once asked for news of my father, and began to speak of him with spontaneous friendliness, almost as though we had met there by arrangement.

AS we talked, I recalled that it had once been said of Bones that he had won all the victories he would ever win by the time he was twenty-two. At Eton, and at Balliol till the end of his third year, he carried all before him. He was Captain of the School at Eton and won both the Newcastle and the Loder. When he came to Balliol in my father's second year he at once dominated the Union and very soon became President. He distinguished himself in every field he entered: he coxed the University crew and, the same summer, won the prize for Greek iambics. His First in Mods was a foregone conclusion, and his tutor confidently looked forward to that final crown, a First in Greats, which would be its logical sequel and would lead to the expected academic career. And then, in his last year, all his brilliance seemed suddenly to be dying. The fire of success had blazed within him so fiercely that it had already exhausted itself and began to fail. It had been assumed that he would take a First, but when he sat his final schools he took not even a Second but a Third. And from the ignominy of this blow Bones never seemed to recover.

He had fallen further and further into obscurity. Throughout his early manhood he was searching for an opportunity and it never came. His Oxford friends tried to help him, and once or twice he accepted the positions in the City which they offered to

their old friend. They were the kind which could have led on to prosperity and material success, but it soon became clear that Bones Agamemnon had no business sense whatever. His friends could not afford him. He wrote a book which was never published and tried his hand unsuccessfully at private tutoring. By the outbreak of war he was thirty-six, and had achieved nothing. He served without distinction, and afterwards, to the distress of his friends, became a junior official in an inconspicuous government department. He stayed there for over thirty years.

Bones knew that he was a failure, and a weaker man would have sought consolation in the memory of his early triumphs by joining the unhappy ranks of those who have convinced themselves that the schoolboy prizes and trophies, which were of such supreme importance when they were won, can retain their value and thus recompense an empty life. Bones was too honest to do this. No inscribed rudder was displayed upon his wall, no prize books lay carelessly on his tables; he wore no Leander tie. He kept in touch with his old friends by coming to the Club from time to time, and it was here that I had met him; but no one liked to ask him about his work, and he never spoke of it himself. He passed the normal age of retirement, but stayed on in the same cramped office, though this cannot have been financially necessary. It was almost as though he took pride in his obscurity.

THIS was all I knew of Bones and I was at a loss to understand why now he should have turned up in Delphi. I was at once curious to find out, and I asked him after a while whether this was his first visit to Greece. His whole face wrinkled into a smile as he replied that it was his second. 'I was in Delphi over fifty years ago,' he told me with a chuckle. 'I remember every detail of it. I was in my third year at Balliol. I took a sailing-vessel from the Piraeus to Cirrha and I walked up from the sea. Magnificent! I always intended to return, and now I'm only here for the day. These confounded conducted tours! Never time for anything! But it's the only way one can manage it nowadays. I'm supposed to be in Athens. I slipped away when no one was looking.' He broke into open laughter. 'I'm a runaway, a truant. I'm playing truant.' He drained his glass and

fumbled for a cigarette, as he wondered whether to tell me the true purpose of his visit. But in the end he said nothing, and we walked out together to the verandah and looked down towards the sea.

The prospect, which I already knew well, is of the most sublime beauty. The sun was already past its zenith in an immaculate sky. Somewhere behind us was the snow-covered peak of Parnassus, but it cannot be seen from the village. Away to our left rolled a patch-work quilt of hills, red interspersed with green and yellow. In front of us, beyond the valley, the superb mountains climbed into the sky, at first wooded with young trees, then of grey and orange rock, where each separate crevice was carefully etched by the sun. A steep path zig-zagged its way towards the summit of one of them, cut deliberately with dead-straight, geometrical lines. Below us, and to the right, a great olive-grove occupied all the valley as it spread out into a plain; beyond the olives, a corner of the sea near Cirrha sparkled like a blue lake. Far above the sea, on the other side of the gulf, ran the shadowy highlands of the Peloponnese, and all around us tumbled layer after layer of craggy mountain. We smoked our cigarettes and listened to the sheep-bells; an eagle was a black speck in the sky. Suddenly Bones turned to me. 'Come, let's walk down into the valley,' he said. I agreed at once without questioning him, and before long we set off together.

AT first we walked in silence. Leaving the main road, we followed a steep path down the mountain, and I was astonished by the man's vigour and agility. He walked with determination, only resting occasionally for a moment to point out a rare flower or to admire a splendid view. He never once looked back. In the plain, we could soon see clearly the great olive-grove, which stretched dark and sinister for many miles beneath us.

After an hour Bones suddenly began to talk. He had decided to take me into his confidence and a few minutes later, though I did not yet understand its full significance, I had learnt why he had at last made this return visit to Delphi. 'Did you ever hear your father mention old Tuppy Bellenger?' he first asked me. I realised that he must be speaking of Sir Tobias Bellenger, the eminent barrister and former cabinet-minister, and when I asked if this were so he gave a little

derisive snort which seemed to sum up his whole opinion of him. 'The old idiot,' he muttered to himself. Then he gave one of his chuckles. 'I've been arguing with him at the Club, on and off, for almost twenty years. I've never been able to make him see. We are agreed that the best view in the world is at Delphi, but Tuppy—he gave another little snort—has always asserted that it's the one which we have just seen, looking *down* from Delphi into the valley. He was here in the 'thirties, you know, leading a legal mission in Athens. I've tried to make him understand that it is better from below, looking *up* towards Parnassus, but he would never come round to my point of view. I remember so clearly how it impressed me when I first walked up from Cirrha those many years ago. The summit of Parnassus stands above everything like a crown, so that the picture is complete. I've always hoped to return, and now at last I can confirm my judgment. I appoint you as my witness.' He looked at me with strange intensity. 'You know, I've always had the suspicion that Bellenger has never *been* down in the valley,' he said. 'I believe that he was just guessing. Oh, just look at those flowers! Here, we take this turning to the right.' He broke off along a divergent pathway, and as I followed him I began to be infected by his eagerness.

IDID not yet realise that, for Bones, the argument with Sir Tobias had become very much more than an argument about a view. It was long afterwards that I came to understand that, in it, he saw symbolised their respective lives—Bones in the dark olive-grove looking up towards the sky, Bellenger on his pinnacle looking downwards upon mankind. So he had come to believe, and this was the particular fallacy which he had constructed for himself, that if he could win the argument he would after his own fashion vindicate his failure, for it would be a failure no longer. The sun was falling down into the mountains as we entered the olive-grove. The thick trees grew closely and, till we came to a clearing, nothing could be seen beyond them. When the pathway ended, we walked on over uneven ground, thick with weeds and grasses. At last we saw a clearing ahead of us. 'There we are,' Bones shouted, and we both headed towards it. Reaching it, we turned together. 'Good God Almighty,' he said.

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I looked. Above the olive-trees, black and grey, rose the mountains, and there on its ledge was Delphi, the very first lights lit. Above Delphi rose the towering escarpment. And then, above the escarpment, came the clear evening sky—and nothing but the sky. Mount Parnassus was nowhere to be seen.

'Is it possible?' said Bones at last, half to himself, with the deepest anxiety, bending this way and that. 'Is it possible that my memory has played me false? I have the distinctest recollection.... All these years... Parnassus. . . .' He adjusted his glasses, muttered and looked again, but the snow-capped mountain-range did not materialise. Acutely now, he communicated his anxiety to me.

I wondered how he could possibly have made the mistake. I thought of his years of argument; I remembered his deep conviction; above all, I imagined his next meeting with Sir Tobias, and it was impossible for me to pretend for Bones that this was more splendid than the superb vista which we had seen earlier from the verandah. I gazed with him in embarrassed silence and it was only after several minutes that a solution occurred to me. The escarpment above Delphi might be a curtain, and Parnassus might lie *behind* it; from a point some way to eastward Parnassus might yet come into view. It was a possible explanation, and it might have been from such a point that Bones had seen it on his first visit. I put forward the suggestion. 'Come on, let's try,' said Bones Agamemnon desperately, clinging to a straw.

WE began to walk, urgently, for the sun had now set. Bones strode on ahead of me, his body hunched, his jacket fluttering loosely about him. He glanced often to the

left, but nothing could be discerned through the darkening olive-trees. From time to time he said a word or two, but more often we were silent. I felt an extreme apprehension, for darkness was softly and quickly falling. It was as though he were struggling for life, or fighting to attain an ideal before death. In a sudden clearing we looked up again towards Delphi, and the first snow-covered slopes were beginning to come into view above the village. 'Look! Look!' shouted Bones, and he broke into a run.

We raced crazily through the undergrowth, first one of us, then the other in the lead. 'Can we get across that bank?' he would shout at me; or, 'Is that a pathway ahead of us?'; or, 'Soon we should reach another clearing.' Once he paused for a moment to point with his stick to a tall white flower. 'Asphodel,' he said. 'The first I've seen here.' We hurried on. It was almost dark, but there was a blue light in the sky. 'Over there! Over there!' said Bones suddenly. He had seen another clearing.

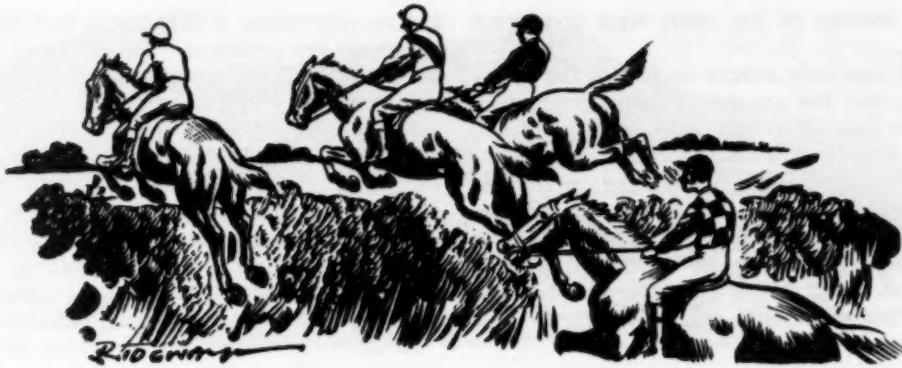
He reached his goal before me, turned, bobbed up and down once or twice, adjusted his glasses, and then stood erect. I reached his side in a moment. Above the grey olive-trees, splendid in shadow and shade, the village of Delphi was aglitter with lights, shining on its mountainside; above Delphi was the escarpment; but now, a little to one side, there towered the whole snowy range, and the great white peak rising atop the village, pointing into the night—the Parnassus which he had remembered for his lifetime, that I would remember for mine, unmoved and immutable after all, everlasting. I could feel it impressing itself on my memory.

We watched for five minutes and never said a word. 'We'd better get back,' said Bones at last. It was night already.

On Soothing the Savage Breast

*Certain discords never should be written
(Such dubious noises as proceed from Britten).
Some sound like armies marching past on gravel,
Though others are less awkward to un-Ravel.
Young Racine Fricker, Hindemith, and all
Who, ruthless, write atonal to appal
Should bear in mind the point I stress is this—
Not all chromatic chords can sound like Bliss.*

PAUL ARMOUR.



Point-to-Point

J. D. WILSON

POINT-TO-POINTS are not what they used to be; they are not now point-to-points at all. In the old days, when they were, they must have been great fun to ride in. Things are different now. You can no longer, as you formerly could, have a day's hunting on Tuesday and ride the same horse in a point-to-point on Saturday—at least not with the remotest chance of winning. You must give up your hunting in February, if not before, and make some attempt at training your horse, for of late years the standard of racing has risen considerably. For both horse and rider, point-to-points have become nurseries in preparation for higher spheres. Russian Hero, who won the Grand National in 1949, is alleged to have failed earlier in his career to win the Members' Race at a point-to-point meeting; and the successful steeplechase jockeys, whose early experience was gained in point-to-points, are innumerable.

The onlookers are largely responsible for the evolution that has taken place from races across country between two points to the hunt steeplechases as they are to-day. When point-to-points were point-to-points, the onlookers can seldom have seen much of them. Nowadays, the success of a sporting event is inclined to be measured by the number of people who turn out to watch it, and it is

assumed, no doubt correctly, that more people will come to watch if they can see something of it. Hence the evolution; and, whatever may be the opinion of the riders on the matter, they are so hopelessly outnumbered by the onlookers that it is of little importance, anyway. But if you go to a point-to-point, not as an onlooker, but to have your first ride in a race, you can perhaps be forgiven if you do not fully appreciate the justice of this. It is a wearing ordeal nowadays, your first ride in a point-to-point.

BETWEEN the time of your arrival at the course and the start of your race you have plenty to do. Having succeeded in forcing a way to the paddock through the milling mob of carefree onlookers, you have first to 'declare' your horse—in other words, you write on a piece of paper provided for the purpose the horse's name, the title of the race in which you intend to take part, and your signature; and you hand the paper to the secretary. You are now committed. There is no escape for you without ridicule.

Then you must 'walk the course.' In the days when point-to-points were point-to-points, you were, I suppose, spared this privilege, for it was presumably not allowed.

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The feelings of the riders were considered then.

To approach a fence on foot in the knowledge that you are shortly going to negotiate it at a gallop is to see it at its most formidable, but neglect to walk the course may easily result in the missing out of a flag, or the loss of many lengths at a tricky corner. It means a walk of two miles or so, or it may be nearly twice as far if the course consists of only one circuit, but it has to be done, and it passes the time admirably.

BACK in the dressing-tent, it is time to change. Though hot after your brisk walk, you are at the same time shivering with internal cold. It is a curious sensation, and the last thing you feel inclined to do is to take your clothes off. You remove your shoes and trousers, and put on lightweight breeches. Your heart is in your boots—or would be, if only you could get your boots on. You exert a tremendous heave; there is a sound of rending material, and a draught in the hinge of your knee betrays where your breeches are torn, for lightweight breeches never seem to fit, and they tear easily; but, blessedly, your foot goes home. You pull on your coloured jersey, cram a helmet on your head, poise your cap on top of it, and you are ready to weigh out. You stagger along to the weighing-tent, carrying your saddle and several pounds of lead, and wait your turn at the scales.

'Any penalties?' asks the Clerk of the Scales.

'No,' you answer, having a clear conscience as to your procedure so far; but the two or three pounds of lead you have still to find in order to attain the minimum weight of 12 stone 7 lb. are a measure of the strain you have endured since your dress-rehearsal on the bathroom scales the evening before.

HAVING adjusted and tied your cap, you saunter out into the paddock with an air of bravado which you can only hope is convincing. You are still sweating and shivering,

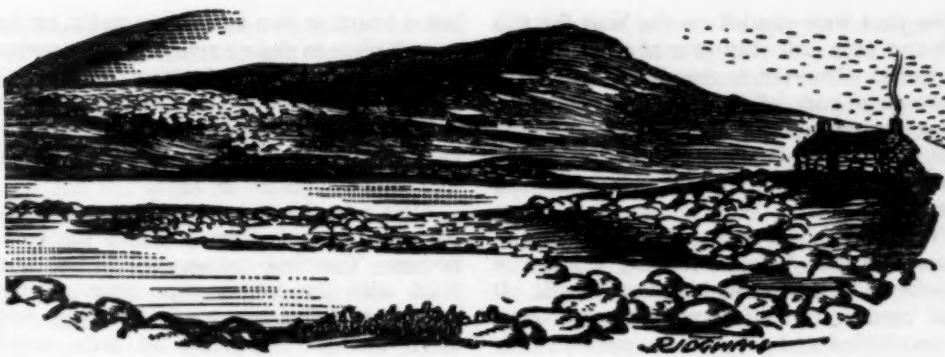
and so, you notice, is your horse, now being led round the perimeter. Its mane and tail plaited, its hindquarters muscle-hard, it looks, you think, every inch a racehorse. At last, a bell rings—the signal to mount. You walk across the paddock to intercept your horse. As its girths are wrenched tighter it impatiently executes ungraceful pirouettes. Once you are mounted, however, your confidence begins to grow. You can acknowledge with a nod the smile of encouragement from an occasional familiar face among the crowd of spectators.

At the exit to the paddock the groom, with a murmured 'Good luck, sir,' abandons his charge to your sole keeping. He has groomed it, strapped it, fed it, and clipped it; he has visited it at dawn and last thing at night to attend to its comforts; he has probably given it his ration of eggs, fed raw for the sake of its wind; and, if there is anything more that he could think of doing, you may be sure that he will have done it. Now, at this moment, he is handing over a sum of money, that he can ill afford, to some bookmaker who does not need it. If, by a miracle, you win the race, 90 per cent of the credit will be due to him; if you do not win, it will be all your fault.

But as you canter down to the start you do not think of these things. You are conscious of nothing but of the exhilaration of the moment. Your horse, ears pricked, neck broad with muscle, is 'on the bit.' You thrust forward your feet in the stirrups and lean against them, as nervous passengers in a motor-car lean against the floor-boards. You are no longer nervous, however. You are loving it.

A delay at the start—there is a call-over, as at school—causes a revival of your apprehension, but this is short-lived. With the other competitors, the majority of whom look, and probably are, hardened veterans of the sport, you approach the starter in a ragged line. He drops his flag suddenly, and you are off.

And the odd thing is that even if you fall at the first fence, breaking your collar-bone into the bargain, you will try again one day—just for the fun of it.



Peat-Fire Memories

III.—*FLOTSAM*

KENNETH MACDONALD

THE motto of the town of Stornoway is 'God's Providence is our Inheritance,' because the town is, or was, dependent on the produce of the sea. But God's providence manifests itself in many ways, and particularly by the flotsam washed up after severe winter gales. How much the Isles depended on this in the past is gathered from the fact that libations of liquor used to be poured into the sea in Lewis to the god Shonny as a gesture of thanks for these benefits.

It is not so very long ago since wrecks and flotsam were regularly prayed for in the Isles. Little or no thought was given to the loss of property. The wreck was looked upon by the Islesmen as a god-sent gift to alleviate their poverty. The lives of sailors were, however, sacred in the Isles, and in this there was a remarkable contrast with the attitude in the south of England, where it is on record that it was not proper to save the life of a stricken sailor. Providence meant him to drown, and so he was pushed back into the sea.

In my own native village, only half-a-century ago, the beach was divided up into portions according as the crofts touched the shore. Nobody dared lay hands on anything

that came ashore on another person's portion. Winter seaweed, or *feamainn thilgte*, was very valuable, and each person gathered regularly the seaweed thrown up on his part of the shore. Much, of course, depended on the direction of the prevailing wind as to where the seaweed gathered, but, over the whole winter, nature and the elements saw to a fair distribution over the beach generally. Sometimes the seaweed was spread on the croft as winter manure, and sometimes it was laid in the midden or compost-heap.

In the springtime, when the big tides were on, the crofters went out to the sunken reefs immediately after the tide had left them. A bit of an old trawl was spread out on the reefs and rapidly filled up with seaweed. When the tide turned, the net was gathered round the heap, firmly secured with ropes, and left until the tide would lift it. A fair quantity of bladder-wrack had to be included in the *maois*, or heap, in order to give it buoyancy, otherwise it would not float. When the tide was full in, a boat went out to secure the seaweed and pull it to the beach. It was a heavy tow, as the heap was usually about eight feet in diameter and six or seven feet deep and floated with only the surface showing.

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Four oars were needed on the boat for this job and each pull only gave about a yard of progress. However, in time it was taken to a convenient part of the beach at high-tide. Next day, when the tide receded, it was shared out in creelfuls, then taken to the roadside, and finally carted home. It was hard work for little return.

The crofters also gathered another kind of seaweed, called *feamainn chirean*, which grew on the rocks just below high-water mark. It was hard curly stuff about six inches long. It was boiled and given to the cattle in their feed.

PERHAPS, however, the most valuable flotsam in the Isles was timber. Timber is very scarce in the Isles. Apart from a small plantation within the castle grounds, there is practically none. The early bird catches the worm, and so the beachcomber is on the job at the screich of dawn. Sometimes he is lucky, sometimes not. If he finds any timber he drags it up above the high-water mark and leaves it there until he has time to collect it. Anything found above high-water mark is not touched by others, as it is an indication that someone has already found it and dragged it up.

There are two outstanding incidents in my memory of really good hauls of timber. One was when a Baltic timber-ship went ashore on the Braigh, and the other when the *Esther Maria* went on the Sgeir Mhor in Stornoway harbour. Both misfortunes were godsends to the crofters, and there was hardly a ditch, drain, or barn in my village but was piled with the gains. The whole deck cargo of the *Esther Maria* had to be jettisoned before the tugs got her off. The timber came ashore on the Mol Beag, or Little Beach, and, when seen higgledy-piggledy as the tide left it, one would never believe that the deck of a ship could hold so much. There were boards and planks of all sizes piled up to a height of fifteen feet along a mile of shore. Indeed a sight for the gods! The Customs put two local men in charge, but I did not envy their job. When darkness came two men could not effectively watch a mile of open lonely shore. Everybody who could crawl, from nine years to ninety, was there.

Not all the timber was taken, however, during the darkness. Some people went down during daylight and asked the watchers for

just a board or two to make a cradle, or just a small piece to make a spurtle, while another, with a wink at his neighbour, wanted just enough to make a violin. But the watchers well knew that these were merely excuses to have a look round to spot the type of stuff they would come for at night.

After a week's time a rumour went round that the Customs were going to search all houses. Thatched cottages which had been lined with the timber were soon covered over with wallpaper; stacks of straw were taken asunder and filled up with wood; newly-built sheds were hastily tarred over; new floors were rapidly covered with anything at all; while all the drains and ditches dividing croft lands were filled up with planks and boards. But the Customs never came. A year later hen-sheds and outhouses sprang up like mushrooms and the village had an air of great prosperity.

I REMEMBER an occasion when a ship, on a voyage from the Faeroes, was forced to throw overboard hundreds of sheep. She had struck bad weather and had run out of water and feeding-stuff and the sheep were dying. The authorities at Stornoway refused to allow any of the sheep to be landed, so the ship went about a mile outside the harbour and dumped them all overboard. A few sheep came ashore alive. The crofters immediately saw an opportunity here. Many went to the shore with their sheep-shears and came home laden with bags of wool. Others took a whole sheep home and replenished their scanty larders. The carcases soon began to decompose on the shore, and eventually a squad had to go round and bury them.

A live whale got stranded on the beach one Sunday morning. That was a great novelty, for although we had seen scores of whales playing in the water we had never seen one ashore. It was a small specimen—just over twenty feet. It was soon put an end to by the crofters with scythes and spades. There were hopes that the fish-offal factory would use the body, but they did not want it. The boys, who thought the beast was dead, had a competition who would walk barefooted along its back. But it was not quite dead, and threw Iain Ruadh several feet into the air with a flip of its tail.

The carcase lay on the beach for weeks and could be smelt sickeningly a mile away.

PEAT-FIRE MEMORIES

Something had to be done about it. A rope was tied round the tail and the body was pulled down the beach, where the tide would lift it. A post was then driven down through the blow-hole in the back of the head to serve as a mast, a sail of sacking was fixed on to it, and the whale was allowed to take its own course out into the Minch.

A great whale, over eighty feet in length, was washed ashore on the west coast of Lewis in 1920. It had a big harpoon stuck in its back. Like the other whale, this one also rotted on the beach, but it was too heavy to move. An enterprising merchant in the village, however, collected the jawbones and the harpoon. He set up the bones to form a large arch in front of his garden-gate, with the harpoon hanging down from the top of the erection. From the highest point of the arch to the ground measures about twenty feet. The arch is one of the features of the island and many visitors make the trip to Bragar to see it.

Skate float regularly ashore in the spring-time during frosty weather. Fishermen say the liver gets too big and then the fish cannot sink. I saw a man coming home with seven one morning, and as spring is the hardest time of the year in the Isles, such a find is specially valuable then.

ONE may find anything on the beach—planks of wood, pit-props, bags of flour, whole hams, empty barrels and full ones, and even the chassis of motor-cars, brand-new—if the tyres are blown up the chassis float.

A cask was found by two crofters among the rocks and they rolled it into a secluded crevice. You can imagine their surprise when they went down with a gimlet the following day and discovered the contents to be neat rum. They told nobody about the find, and every day for weeks they had a quiet walk to the spot after dinner and tea and came back in sparkling mood. However, suspicions were soon aroused, and the nest was discovered. The Customs eventually took the cask away, but not before pailfuls of the liquor were distributed.

A friend of my own found a barrel of grease on the shore, and rolled it up above high-water mark. He reported it to the Customs, who sent the usual forms for claiming salvage. There were so many questions that George got annoyed at them; so, when it came to the one asking about witnesses to the find, he wrote down two seagulls, a cormorant, and a seal. The barrel was never collected by the Customs, and the crofters used the grease for lubricating the wheels of their carts and barrows.

But as boys our most precious finds were the corks from the fishermen's nets. They had a handy hole through the middle, so we could string enough of them together to form a lifebelt for swimming. Our first introduction to swimming was always with a string of corks under the armpits.

There are gruesome finds also at times, such as corpses. My chum, a boy of ten years, once found a man's leg lying on the beach.

One greedy, selfish crofter used to make sure that he would be first on the shore, so he was there each morning before dawn. A neighbour, however, decided to stop it. He got up one morning long before dawn, put on his brand-new sea-boots and went to the beach. He lay down at the high-water mark and covered himself well over with wet seaweed, leaving one leg partly exposed. He did not have to wait very long. Dawn was breaking and he could hear his beachcomber friend trudging along on the loose shingle. The beachcomber noticed the body, and also a brand-new pair of sea-boots. He lifted up the leg and had a good tug at the sea-boot, but it was too tight a fit. He turned his back on the body and decided to try it the fisherman's way. He got the boot in between his legs, caught it by the heel, and pulled. But at that moment the body kicked him hard on the pants with the other leg and sent him sprawling on the shingle. That was enough, for he made off for home as fast as his trembling legs could carry him, not even venturing to look behind in case the 'body' was following. That cured him. He never went to the shore again before dawn.



Mrs Spenser-Horrabin

LAURENCE KIRK

NAMES conjure up pictures, and that of Mabel Spenser-Horrabin might easily suggest a stout lady on high heels who was of some importance in the town in which she lived. She would do her shopping in Barton Street, where the best shops were; and if she served on any committees she would be at least vice-chairman. Her house would have a garage, a television aerial, and a little semi-circular drive to the front-door. Inside, it would be solid, comfortable, and rather dark; but the guest-towels would be immaculate. The cooking would be dull and unimaginative; but that would be made up for by an abundance of lace mats, silver dishes, and elaborate cruet-stands. Her husband, if he had not already passed on, would be a rather silent man, connected with insurance probably, who read the evening paper from cover to cover.

The real Mrs Spenser-Horrabin was very different. Although she had two children, aged six and three, she was still streamlined and generally wore khaki shorts during the day. Her face was pleasing, too, with blue eyes and pronounced nostrils which gave it a thoroughbred appearance. She did not serve on any committees, because there were no neighbours to form committees. Apart from the hotel which eked out a precarious existence

on the escarpment four miles away the only company was unexpected stranded travellers whose cars had broken down. These always arrived when supplies were getting low. Her husband, Rupert Spenser-Horrabin, was a game-warden and had nothing to do with insurance any more than insurance would have anything to do with him. He did not read the evening paper, because there was no evening paper to read, and, anyway, he was generally out on safari. When there, his wife addressed him as 'Rupert,' 'Darling,' and 'You ass,' in almost equal proportions, and all with the same note of affection.

The house, which was in the middle of Africa, almost within touch of the equator, did have a garage; but there was no semi-circular drive nor any sign of a television aerial. The roof was of corrugated-iron, painted red, and during the rainy season this was also responsible for the water-supply. In the dry season water had to be carried three miles from a crater-lake. This was quite an undertaking, so for economy all used the same bath-water. The bath-water was then employed for washing the clothes and linen, and what was left was poured over the garden. The linen did not come out too badly, and the garden thrived under the treatment. Sanita-

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tion was of the very best bucket variety, and the garden benefited from that, too.

Shopping was quite a problem. Most of the important stores, from gin down to pepper and salt, came from an Indian merchant eighty-nine miles away, and that over a road which was often impassable in bad weather. Meat could be obtained from a mere sixty miles away; but it was tough and stringy, and the household lived mainly on the excellent fish which was brought daily from the nearest crater-lake. There were plenty of eggs and chickens, excellent vegetables, oranges, lemons, limes, papaws, and delicious little sweet bananas, all at ridiculously low prices. Milk presented no problem. It came out of a tin. Lighting also came out of a tin, and was either pressure or hurricane. The main anxiety was medical attention. That came either from the Government Medical Officer a hundred miles away or, in an emergency, from the copper-mine at thirty-eight miles. But fortunately both Robert, the six-year-old, and Anne, the three-year-old, seemed to be possessed of unbounding health.

MABEL had had to do some adjusting before she came to appreciate Chichomba. She was born in Wimbledon and brought up within reach of Barton Street and the various committees. And it wasn't as though she had recklessly gone and married a game-warden. She had married a perfectly respectable young auditor. It wasn't her fault that during the war she had nearly become the widow of a naval officer. It wasn't her fault, either, that the naval officer almost went crazy when he became an auditor again, and begged her with tears in his eyes to cut their moorings adrift and try anything that wasn't auditing.

Apart from being a first-class shot and an amateur naturalist, Rupert's qualifications were a bit sketchy, and they had three months in Nairobi while he was learning his job. After that they were plunged straight into the loneliness of Chichomba, and for a time Mabel nearly went as crazy as Rupert had been in Wimbledon. It was the end of the dry season when they arrived. The natives were burning off the grass for their planting and a smoky pall lay over everything. Mabel could only dimly see the far side of the flat valley below the house, and the vast snow-covered mountain which lay to the north-west was completely invisible. At first she could only count the

obvious disadvantages of the place—the loneliness; the silence; the stupidity of the untrained servants; the shortage of water; the heavy heat at midday; and the lack of news. There seemed to be nothing that could make life tolerable there. The nearer half of the valley down below was dotted with single flat-topped trees and at sunrise each had a pool of shadow towards the west. That pool moved slowly until it was directly underneath the tree and equally slowly until it was to the east of it. That was the only movement in the whole scene. No bustle: no traffic of any kind. And the silence lay on Mabel like a heavy blanket on a hot night. It was only broken by the Time-Signal bird, which would suddenly give the six-o'clock signal at any hour of the day or night—and then lapse into silence again.

But then slowly Mabel began to realise that she was dealing in a new currency and had to learn the values of it. The children at least were happy and did not suffer from the snuffles that had afflicted them in Wimbledon. And they were always finding new things to interest them. Sometimes these things were strange insects, and Mabel was in a panic lest they got stung. But then she began to learn that, though there were dangers lurking around, most of the animals, and even the insects, were much too busy living their own interesting lives to bother about the small family of human beings who had come to stay amongst them. And the same applied to the tribesmen, the Wahili, who looked so fierce with their spears. It was quite easy to get a smile out of them if you learned a few words of their language; and their women were sweet and their children adorable. And it was much the same with the houseboys and the garden boys who belonged to the same tribe. Certainly they rarely did anything right; but that was not for lack of trying, and they never stole anything except sugar. Sugar had to be kept firmly under lock and key.

So Mabel began to find new values in her new surroundings. The mornings were deliciously fresh and the evenings divinely peaceful. She found that the Time-Signal bird was not the only one, as she had thought at first. There were many others—yellow-weavers, crimson waxbills; golden orioles, blue kingfishers; not to mention cranes and storks and fish-eagles. Soon she was able to identify their notes, from the sad cry of the fish-eagle to the bubbling chatter of the king-

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fisher. And she only had to walk down the hill to the marsh, and there was the forest with its brilliant greens and reds, with white-jowled colobus monkeys swinging about. Sometimes, too, when he had some time off, Rupert used to take her and the children down in the fishing-launch on the channel between the two lakes, and there they could creep up behind the hippo in the water and the elephant on the banks, and watch the buffalo and antelope unobserved. And, finally, when the fierce storm came and the rains broke, the whole vast scene of mountain, lake, and forest suddenly came into view, all freshly lacquered by the downpour.

After that, instead of thinking how she could manage to live there, Mabel began to wonder how she could ever bear to live anywhere else. Even the absence of news and newspapers ceased to trouble her. She realised that she had rarely read anything comforting in a newspaper in the last five years. And the hotel did provide them with some varied company. Once a week a small bus-load of tourists came through on their way to the Congo, and Rupert did his best to arrange his safaris so that they could go and have dinner at the hotel that night. The tourists often had distinguished people amongst them, Americans and others, heads of important companies taking their ease. The trouble was that, while Rupert and Mabel wanted to hear about the world at large and the various near-wars that were taking place in it, the tourists refused to talk about anything except lions and elephants. So Rupert used to regale them with stories of his adventures, generally more or less truthful. And if he needed a bottle of whisky he could always earn one quite easily from the manager of the hotel. He used to stop on the way back to their house and do a most realistic lion's roar by blowing in a certain way into the neck of a soda-water bottle. As a matter of fact, lions did roar quite often in the valley down below; but they couldn't be relied upon to do it the night the tourists were there; nor was their roar nearly so life-like and impressive as Rupert's with his soda-water bottle.

ALL the country down below the house, the savannah and the forest, the channel and the lakes, was game reserve. That had a considerable influence on the lives of the Spenser-Horrabins. In a normal area the law is

designed to protect human beings from their own stupidities and from each other. In a game reserve it is different. The animals come first and the law is designed to protect them from the human beings—and that included the Wahili. The Wahili knew the law as well as anyone else, but they also knew that, while the animals in the legitimate hunting-grounds were extremely wary and often dangerous, they were generally as soft as butter in the protection of the game reserve. So the Wahili's spare-time occupation was poaching, and Rupert Spenser-Horrabin spent a good deal of his time catching them and running them in before the Saza chief, who would either fine them or set them to work on the roads. It was really the Wahili's propensity for poaching that kept the roads of the district in such excellent condition.

Mabel had a certain sympathy for the poachers. She had known enough of rationing in England to realise that a baby hippo must be a great temptation to a meat-hungry people. On the other hand, she did not like the idea of the baby hippo being trapped and taken from its mother, and she was quite ready to help Rupert enforce the law. Within limits, that is. The limit came quite early, when she had only been at Chichomba a few weeks. That was during the early period, when Mabel imagined that there was a lion in every cupboard, a snake behind each blade of grass, and a scorpion in both of her bedroom slippers. Naturally, when Rupert went off on his first safari they had a highly emotional leave-taking. After that Mabel sat listening to the Time-Signal bird and imagined the most frightful things happening both to Rupert and herself. Nothing happened at all for thirty-six hours, but then she saw a native policeman coming up the path with two awful-looking ruffians carrying spears. She immediately jumped to the conclusion that Rupert had been murdered. However, the policeman came forward, saluted smartly, and handed her a pencil-note in Rupert's handwriting. She then immediately went to the other extreme. How sweet of him to write, she thought. What a darling he really is!

The note, however, brought her rather promptly back to earth.

'Darling (it began)

'Good safari. Hope you're enjoying yourself. Here are a couple of poachers. Just lock them in the garage for the night and the policeman will take them down to

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the Saza chief in the morning. Take care of yourself. A kiss for Robert and Anne.

'Love,

RUPERT.'

Whatever Mabel felt at that moment there was really nothing she could do except what Rupert suggested. So, with a brave face, she politely showed the two black ruffians into the empty garage and locked the door on them. She knew that she must not try to remove their spears. The Wahili were a docile people as long as you did not try to separate them from their spears. If you did, you were for it. In point of fact, they would still be carrying their spears when they appeared in the dock the following morning. In the meantime they were so satiated with baby hippo that they fell asleep almost before Mabel had locked the door on them; and they went quite quietly when the policeman came back for them the next day.

Mabel had a good deal to say on the subject when Rupert returned two days later. But she could not even get his undivided attention. The fortnightly mail had arrived during his absence and he went on reading it while she talked. At intervals he did look up and say: 'But, darling, they're quite harmless!' When she still went on after that he picked up another letter with the casual unhelpful remark: 'But where else could you have put them, sweetie?'

That really settled it. When they had been a year at Chichomba it was quite commonplace for Mabel to have up to half-a-dozen poachers locked overnight in the garage while Rupert was on safari.

THIS was quite satisfactory from many points of view, but by the time that year was ending it was the dry season again. The mountain had disappeared behind its pall of cloud, the film of smoke lay over the valley again, and the Time-Signal bird had a touch of hysteria in its monotonous note. Mabel had thought that she was accustomed to Chichomba in all its seasonal variations, but the old uneasiness came creeping back over her again. It wasn't that it was really any hotter at midday; but it seemed hotter, and more lifeless and stagnant, too. And it wasn't that the houseboys were really any stupider than they always were; but their stupidity was more irritating. And Mabel wasn't the only one affected. Robert and Anne had

sudden tears and tempers without any reason. Rupert was the only one who seemed to be immune.

And that year the rains went about their business in a maddeningly leisurely fashion. Back in the hills only ten miles away there had already been heavy thunderstorms and the ground was carpeted with fresh green grass and all sorts of wild flowers. But, whatever happened around them, Chichomba always seemed to be left out. Every evening the clouds piled up to the west, moved growling round to the south, broke out in vivid flashes of lightning, threatened, promised, advanced, retired, and then melted away at the first touch of sunrise. Sometimes in the middle of the night there was a puff of wind which set all the curtains in the bedroom flapping. That should have been the beginning, and once there were even a few heavy drops smacking on to the corrugated-iron. But it all came to nothing. The next morning the smoke was as thick as ever down in the valley and the Time-Signal bird as querulous as a nagging wife.

Mabel had been praying and praying that Rupert would not have to go on safari and leave her at this time. But, of course, it had to happen, and it did. There were complaints that another tribe was stealing the fishing-nets of the Wahili, and their catches, too, out in the deep-water lake. That was a thing that might lead to serious trouble, and Rupert had to try and nip it in the bud. There was nothing for Mabel to do but to put on a brave face. But the sense of strain grew deeper as Rupert drove off in the Chevrolet. Nerves, she told herself—just nerves, nerves, nerves! But there was another voice speaking in her other ear. When things go wrong in Africa, it told her, they go wrong suddenly and very wrong indeed.

WHEN Rupert was barely out of sight there was a sudden scare. Acrid smoke came pouring across the garden and there was a sound of crackling much too near. As a matter of fact, the fire was put out easily enough; but Mabel couldn't help wondering how it had started. Was it accident, or was it perhaps design? She knew that there was a wedding down in the Wahili village that day. She knew, too, that the fishermen and the ferryman had just had a rise in pay. These two things meant a party, and a party meant

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beer. And the Wahili did have at least one thing in common with the more civilised peoples. When they drank too much beer they could do extremely silly things.

However, there was no more trouble that day; and when night fell the sounds of festivity in the village were not too riotous and excessive. Later there was another big fire on a hill to the east, well away from the house. It made a V-sign of flames in the darkness, and Mabel found herself comforted by it. She felt that Winston Churchill was still watching over her as he had watched over her during the war, and she knew that everything would turn out all right.

But in spite of the V-sign there was more trouble the next day. Half the houseboys and garden-boys didn't turn up at all and those that did arrive had such a hangover that they couldn't do any work. Mabel knew that there was nothing to be done until they sobered down again, and she kept Robert and Anne within sight and tried to think of cheerful things. But there was a cloud which seemed to be made of sulphur and brimstone hanging right over the deep-water lake where Rupert was out in the rickety launch. Mabel wanted to put her shoulder against it and push it away from the lake, where it might do so much harm, and bring it round to Chichomba where it could only do good. But the cloud went on growing in size and rumbling at intervals.

And then at six o'clock, when the sun was setting, the policeman came up the hill with no less than eight ruffians in front of him. Mabel did not pause to ask whether their crime was eating hippo meat, or something else. She locked them and their spears into the garage as quickly as she could, and was at least grateful for the fact that their breath didn't smell of beer.

Still, there were more sounds of revelry in the village when she went to bed, and she took Robert and Anne from their cots and made them come into her bed with her. Her main worry at that moment was the brimstone cloud. In sound and fury it was like the London blitz at its worst, and she knew that Rupert was right in the midst of it. Fortunately she could not see him; for he had already lost his dinghy and was going round in circles in the lashing rain in the middle of the lake with his steering jammed, and cursing as only a well-trained naval officer could curse.

But while this was happening so close at hand it was hot and stifling in the bedroom at

Chichomba. There did not seem to be one atom of oxygen in the air, and there were still the same wild sounds of revelry from the village. It was nearly midnight when the curtains stirred suddenly, then billowed out and flapped. The sound relieved the tension for a moment; but in another second Mabel realised that the sound was accompanied by a smell. Burning again! And there was a crackling, too, behind the flapping of the curtains, and the light of flames when she looked outside.

Robert was awake, and she told him to stay where he was and look after Anne. Outside in her dressing-gown, the first thing she noticed was that the mown grass by the house was covered with sparks. She had put her foot on two or three of them before she realised that they were harmless glow-worms. But she wasn't mistaken about the crackling. The dry grass was well alight and the wind was fanning the flames towards the house. The garage, too, was in the line of danger, and Mabel hurried back into the house and got the key. Thinking of the eight ruffians inside with their eight spears, she hesitated one second before unlocking the door. By this time one or two of the servants were about, still half-dazed with drink and sleep. For the next half-hour they and Mabel and the eight poachers fought valiantly and vainly to beat out the flames. Finally, when they were nearly exhausted and the flames were almost within reach of both house and garage, the edge of Rupert's storm caught them in a solid sheet of water and they all fled pell-mell for the nearest shelter.

THE rain had stopped when dawn broke the following day. The snow-mountain was already back in its appointed place and the valley and all the trees in it had a new fresh coat of lacquer. Mabel, however, was not yet aware of these important changes. She and Robert and Anne were all fast asleep in the double-bed.

Rupert grinned as he looked down on them. He had escaped with nothing worse than the loss of his dinghy and was not feeling too badly over the night's misfortunes. He was still grinning when Mabel stirred and opened one sleepy eye. 'Nice sort of family I've got!' he announced. 'Just go on snoring their heads off while father nearly goes up in a water-spout!'

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That brought Mabel wide-awake, and in a few terse sentences, while the children still slept, she described the last forty-eight hours at Chichomba. Rupert listened gravely, nodding at intervals; and Mabel finally, remembering that she had quite forgotten to lock up the poachers again, ended on a slightly defensive note. 'I'm sorry about the poachers, Rupert. But I had to let them out. Apart from my needing their help, they might have got burnt to a cinder.'

'That's all right, darling,' Rupert said calmly.

Mabel glanced at him before she went on. Then she continued in her most coaxing tone: 'Couldn't you let them off this time, Rupert? They really tried very hard to put the fire out.'

'I'm sure they did,' Rupert agreed. 'But they were caught red-handed and I think they would take it very much amiss if I didn't go on and charge them.'

'But you'll have all the trouble of rounding them up again. And I don't want you to go away so soon.'

'I shan't have to go away, darling,' he assured her.

Mabel now glanced at him more sharply. 'How do you mean, Rupert?'

'They're all still there in the garage,' he explained.

'You mean they went back and locked themselves up!'

'They didn't lock themselves up, darling, because they didn't have the key. But they certainly put themselves back there—with their spears. Perhaps they just didn't want to get wet: perhaps they never thought of escaping: perhaps they overslept this morning. Who can know what goes on in a Wahili mind? Anyway, there they are. I'll see that they get a light sentence. They're quite good fellows really.'

Boys in Clubland

A. J. FORREST

THE fearful monotony of prison life undoubtedly helped Captain Percy Flood of the Royal West Kents to rouse, one bitter day in January 1945, the interests of his fellow prisoners of war in a scheme for founding boys' clubs on blitzed sites in Britain. Here, as he conceived it, was a way of doing a good turn in peacetime to the ordinary decent British soldier and of forging in the process a link for maintaining that fine regimental tradition by which officers personally serve the welfare of their troops.

Oflag 79, where this meeting took place, was a dreary, gloom-cast prison-camp, sited close to the autobahn just outside Brunswick. In it the enemy guarded some 3000 Allied officers and men, as sceptical a collection as any ordinarily cooped up behind entanglements.

Flood's zeal, deeply religious in character, disarmed cynicism and apathy alike. The prisoners included several names famous in sport, among them F. R. Brown, the England cricket captain, and W. Bowes, a great bowler for Yorkshire and England in the bodyline era. As Flood talked, it seemed to all his listeners, sportsmen and non-sportsmen, that he had hit upon a happy plan to brighten life for the demobilised soldier's son, boys robbed by war of their playgrounds, perhaps also of their homes.

The camp's enthusiasm suddenly flamed forth. A special trust was formed, the senior British officer, Lieutenant-Colonel J. W. Dunnill, D.S.O., presiding. Then almost everyone threw his energies into the essential task, that of fund-raising. Artists painted pictures,

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feverishly, I can believe, and sold them for the cause. One man, auctioning a hundred cigarettes, each one nearly as precious as a stick of gold, raised £100; another put up a treasured tin of bully and made £50; a third, a tailor in civvy street, promised to make the winner in his raffle a suit of clothes; a fourth raffled 'bed and breakfast at my expense, but no extras, for one night at the Savoy Hotel.' Thus shortly before VE-Day, when these men streamed through open gates to freedom, their guards craving their protection from advancing Russians, the proudly magnificent sum of £13,000 had been collected or promised to back Flood's idealism.

A FEW nights ago I called on the Brunswick Boys' Club in Haldane Road, Fulham. This favoured institution, opened by the Duke of Edinburgh in July 1949, occupies prefabricated buildings, stretching over a bomb-blasted site. The full-time warden in charge, Mr A. R. Royall, was, as a paratrooper, captured at Arnhem. And, perhaps fortunately for his future career, he was marched to Oflag 79. In him the Club's Trustees, all ex-Oflag Seventy-niners, recognise a born club-leader.

'Tubby' Warner, hard-pressed boy editor of the Club's bimonthly magazine, *The Phoenix*—he is for ever chasing members for copy—led me through the well-appointed buildings. Activity abounded. In the gymnasium, some lads were warming up for five-a-side indoor football, kicking the ball in their gym-shoes with cannon-ball velocity. The billiard-tables were in full cue. Outside is an asphalt playground, big enough for a miniature football-field. I saw among other amenities the Club's carpentry shop, quiet-room, library, canteen, and shower-baths, all in well-used order. Both junior and senior boys were at this time 'in committee,' deciding future programmes.

The Club is run on the house system, there being four houses—Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa—each with its boy captain and vice-captain. 'This is but one chance among many,' said Mr Royall, 'for youngsters to try out and improve their own leadership qualities; it works well both inside and outside our competitions.' There are about 90 members aged 14 to 18, and some 65 aged 11 to 14, nearly all of whom live within 1½-mile radius of the Club. Before long a

Tadpole Section for the very young, aged 7 to 11, was started. There is even a waiting-list.

Whenever a new lad joins, the Warden makes a point of visiting his home. Whatever the reception, sometimes it is a curt rebuff, such visits help him immeasurably to understand a boy's character and background.

In the club-leader each boy has not only a loyal friend but also a trusted counsellor. From him, and from those volunteers who assist him—at this particular club, a B.B.C. engineer, a barrister, an art student, a sales manager, and a civil servant—youngsters grow up to adopt, instinctively, Christian standards of behaviour. However inadequate the home life of the boys, the good club is for them a home from home, a place where, amid the give-and-take of games, or the mutual interests associated with craft hobbies, drama, music, or art studies, they learn how to fit in with their fellows and how to measure up to their future responsibilities as men. In brief, the art of citizenship is placed in their hands.

Apart from the Fulham Club, its foundational enterprise, the Brunswick Trust is to-day supporting Boys' Clubs at Twickenham, Hampstead, and Chalfont St Giles, as well as in Glasgow, Huddersfield, and Liverpool. To the Trust's funds no fewer than five hundred of Oflag 79's one-time inmates have become regular subscribers, some sending contributions from places so far distant as Assam and Australia. The boys themselves, sharing in this idealistic prison-born experiment, do unquestionably catch many a gleam of inspiration from its unusual origins, and, although they do not say much about it, an atmosphere of valiance, based on excitingly stimulative motive-powers, imbues many of their activities.

NUMERICALLY, the Boys' Club Movement in England and Wales to-day registers good and improving health. The National Association of Boys' Clubs, for example, founded in 1925, has now 2560 clubs affiliated to it within the two countries; this embraces roughly 190,000 boys, denotes an increase in clubs since 1945 of 560, and a net increase in boys, allowing for loss of members due to over-age, of approximately 12,000 in the same period. Mixed clubs are, also, holding their membership well, but chiefly at the cost of exclusively girls' clubs. I very much question if girls, by themselves, can ever be

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good clubsters. So strong a community instinct is not, I suspect, in their sex. For boys under 16, however, the all-boy club remains a primary necessity, and, although after that age many senior boys show a preference for mixed company, large numbers stay faithful to their old company, reluctant to forsake the sense of masculine virility and sturdy competition thus engendered. Several even admit that a night or two each week 'at the club' allows them a convenient escape from their girl friends!

Not so cheerful is the difficulty of finding sufficient men of the right calibre who are prepared to devote their leisure time to youth service as voluntary club-leaders. The Association has at present 500 full-time, trained professional leaders. They take charge of the larger clubs, but without voluntary help many of those clubs could not carry on, and 2060 clubs are run entirely by men, and in one or two cases by women, for the love of it. The Adelphi Lads' Club in Lancashire has five volunteer helpers, each of whom has fifty years of continuous service to that club behind him—an amazing record.

Leaders in their thirties are in great scarcity. This is a sad gap, aggravated no doubt by the past war and our still existing state of emergency. In 1950 the London Federation, to which 261 boys' clubs are affiliated, had to close down 24 clubs, chiefly because no voluntary help was available. 'We need volunteers desperately,' said Mr T. B. Lawson, the Federation's late Training Secretary. 'Without voluntary service the movement loses its head and its heart; its justification, the power to pioneer and experiment, would, I believe, soon ebb away under statutory control. And there is a widespread need still for progressive experiment if we are to grip and hold the imaginations of contemporary youth.'

Since 1939, however, one significant change is noticeable in the status of voluntary club-leaders. Formerly, public-school and university men filled this role almost exclusively. Before the First World War Mr Attlee himself managed the Haileybury Boys' Club at Stepney in London's East End, and this is still one of some 30 clubs financed and supported by public-schools in London to-day. University missions also adopted clubs. The need for club-leaders with good educational backgrounds has not declined. Upon analysing the occupations of those taking its monthly courses for voluntary leaders at St Pierre,

Chepstow, the National Association found that 33 men represented professional, clerical, and business interests, whereas 88 were skilled men in industry—that is those who had served some apprenticeship, and 44 others were in the semi-skilled category of industrial worker. These working-men, too, have much to give youngsters in present-day Britain.

All working boys undergo a period of unsettlement, akin to teething troubles, when they leave school and enter industry. In order to help them, the Association has inaugurated for school-leavers 'adjustment to industry courses' at its boy training-centre, Ford Castle, Berwick-upon-Tweed. Here, in a week's course amid invigorating surroundings, a boy receives insight into industry's basic foundations and broad designs; he learns the part played by trade unions, the functions of works committees, duties of personnel officers, role of the junior employment officer, and how, for instance, P.A.Y.E. works. Consequently, when he reports to his work-bench, he feels himself less lost as a digit in a bewildering, noisy, impersonal world. He should then, as one manager stated, be able to view his career constructively from his very first job. And, for boys who are on the verge of entering industry, or just starting their industrial lives, it is a double advantage for them to have in their club a man, experienced in industrial problems, and one in whose friendly guidance and advice they have complete confidence.

THERE remains the challenge to the entire movement of that post-war malaise, juvenile delinquency. Experience shows, especially in London, that in areas where boys' clubs are reasonably prolific and well-conducted juvenile crime is relatively slight, but in other regions, not covered by clubs, or interspersed with bad clubs, hooliganism is of considerable consequence.

As Dr D. H. Stott has shown, in his invaluable studies of juvenile delinquency for the Carnegie Trust, it is the boy deprived of home life who nourishes the problem. Unloved, rarely, in fact, having known any affection from his earliest days, or living, perhaps, with parents who are at loggerheads, he soon loses both sensitivity and any capacity for holding affection for others. Uncurbed and undisciplined, his thoughts turned in on himself, this youngster may become one of

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four types—a paranoiac, who feels that the world is against him; an isolate, one dull-witted and usually of poor calibre mentally; a sufferer from an acute inferiority complex; or a screen-made adventurer, one craving artificial and sensual thrills to make up for his defects of character. The first and last type can readily slip into lifelong habits of crime.

How are clubs to arrest such tendencies? All boys' clubs, but particularly those situated in poor districts, experience a rising temperature of respectability. Lads who come to meetings originally in dirty working-clothes, with grubby hands and a scarf round their necks, reappear a week or so later cleanly washed and turned out in something approaching their Sunday-best. Looking at them, the boy in the next street feels either that they are 'sissies' or have become 'too grand a lot for me.'

There is real need, as Dr Stott suggests, for more clubs of the small den type, clubs of about thirty to forty members, which can promise their youngsters a sense of adventure, even if it is only a chance to scale high ladders and splash some paint on the roof of their headquarters. Usually clubs which ask the most of their boys get the best results. Some excellent clubs to-day are functioning on practically nothing, except their own creative energy and enthusiasm, using as their head-

quarters old garages, derelict barns, defunct windmills, schoolrooms, and warehouses.

A notable experiment in this line is the Thames Barge Club, launched five years ago as a club for 'unclubables,' boys who deemed themselves 'too tough' for any club to hold. A gang was persuaded to join. Soon other gangs came along, and odd boys who rather prided themselves then on their police-records. The old Thames barge, s.s. *Normanhurst*, was given them for a club house. Queen Mary took a personal interest in the scheme.

They began by understanding that the ship was theirs, their home afloat, if they cleaned her up and looked after her properly. Their adventurous instincts quickened, and although the enthusiasm of some members rose and fell sporadically, in keeping with their characters, after nearly a year of trial and error strong and positive rewards began to emerge—a community sense, in which boys began finding the right touch among themselves and the right touch with adults. Now, more old barges, or semi-derelict boats, are wanted for conversion into club rooms and as goads to adventure for tough lads. Initiative, virility, and imagination govern this great youth movement. Grounded securely on disciplined freedoms, with the Christian faith as their bedrock, boys' clubs have still an immense power for good to exert in the land.

Snakes by the Foot and Phial

MARTIN THORNHILL

PLAGUES of rats in and about Sydney, Australia, gave birth, a little while ago, to a new trade—snake hire. Harmless to man, certain serpents are found specially suitable for keeping down the pests in warehouses, stores, and even cake-factories; and a small Sydney firm, which hitherto sold snakes in a modest way for this purpose, found it more profitable

during the plague to hire them. Other concerns followed suit.

The best breed for the work, mainly because its natural diet is rodents, seems to be a small variegated python known as the carpet-snake. He is cousin to the ten-to-twelve-foot scrub python, in whose case food facts are reversed—the aborigines spear and eat him. During

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the late war snake-hire rates were controlled at about 5s. a foot. Subsequently, however, the Government decontrolled the price, and rates, boosted to a still higher level by the urgency of the need, soared to £5, plus 15s. per foot for outsizes, for the larger and longer the snake the bigger his appetite. Normally, the hirer can keep the ratters until his premises are certified cleared.

Similar operations flourish on many poultry-farms in America. Indeed, in some States the chicken- or rat-snake enjoys special protection, for, with a capacity of six rats a week, he is accounted a priority worker, and very naturally farmers like to have him about the place. Plagues of vermin in areas of India were lately traced to the systematic annihilation of serpents for the benefit of the leather-trade and in the interests of safety-first. Now that country's useful rat-snake is stoutly protected by unwritten law almost throughout the land.

Though not strictly parallel with these roles, a passing strange function for the much-maligned python is the minding of safes and stores. Reports of pythonic guardians doing sentry-go over valuable possessions have come from several quarters, the nearest to home being no farther away than York. The safe belonging to a grocery store having been sent away for repairs, the owner put the shop's takings each night under his sixteen-foot pet Indian python for safety.

SIMULTANEOUSLY with Sydney's novel ratter-snake service a new snake-farm was opened in Natal, South Africa. An enormous establishment, this place will eventually accommodate some eight thousand snakes, including cobras, puff-adders, and the even more deadly mambas. The especial function of the farm is, of course, serum production, though not alone for snake-bite, but in the general service of surgery and medicine. The use of snake venom against snake-bite has, in fact, been going ahead since South Africa first opened its big snake-park at Port Elizabeth, followed by others in Australia and Siam, and by the Haffkine Institute in Bombay. Nowadays supplies of the life-saving anti-venin prepared at these laboratory farms are found in every prudent home and farmhouse. Experiments in the sphere of serpent-serum treatment of maladies less closely related to snake-bite are, however, of more recent date.

Although Britain is virtually free from poisonous snakes, our viper or adder is far from innocuous and is responsible every year for a certain number of deaths, especially among children. Thus the subject of snake-bite, and its prevention and cure, excite perennial interest. The snake is equipped with two glands, one on each side of the head, and it is the business of the cells composing these glands to manufacture a fluid which, in varying degrees, is poisonous to almost all forms of life. Even a plant which has been inoculated with an infinitesimal dose of venom shrivels up and dies. Snake venom is, in fact, one of the most subtle of all the poisons, and it responds best to treatment of which the basis is serums prepared directly from the poison itself.

A poisonous snake injects its gland-stored venom by means of two specialised teeth in the upper jaw. These fangs are short in some species, long in others. The short are grooved on the anterior surface, and are rigidly attached to the upper jaw. The long, often measuring up to an inch, are hollow like a curved hypodermic needle, and are fixed to movable bones which enable them to fold backward when the jaws are closed, but they stand erect when the reptile opens its mouth to strike. At their bases the fangs are connected with the poison glands on either side.

In the operation of artificially extracting the poison, the laboratory expert lifts the reptile out of its cage, or, in the case of the enclosed farm, from the ground, with a stout three-foot bamboo stick, and drops it on a coir mat spread on the floor. Using the stick's forked end, the handler then pins the snake down near the head, grasps the reptile by the neck with the other hand, releases the stick, grabs the tail with the freed hand, and lifts the snake from the floor.

Thus held, the patient, if short-fanged, is induced to bite a piece of parchment tied over the top of a wine-glass. In the case of a long-fanged snake the vertical side of a shallow glass dish is pushed into the opened mouth, and a gentle outward massage applied to the fangs. The reptile is thus milked of its golden, syrup-like venom, and receives a dose of egg-flip and a fortnight's holiday to compensate it for its loss. A new method of extraction is by electric-shock; it is cleaner and more efficient. Impurities having been eliminated centrifugally, as in a cream-

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separator, the venom is then dried *in vacuo* over strong sulphuric acid until it resembles a granular breakfast-food, when it is stored in airtight vessels till required for experimental work or for the preparation of anti-venin for immunisation.

Anti-venin is a serum, and is prepared in the same way as all other curative serums, as distinct from protective vaccines. Usually the selected 'guinea-pigs' are horses. The animals are injected with increasing doses of the venom, starting with small sub-lethal measures, the process being continued for months—for years if necessary—until the horses have attained a full degree of immunity. At this stage blood is drawn from the animals and the lymph or serum separated from the blood. This—the anti-venin—is filtered, sterilised, then bottled for distribution to the public.

In normal conditions the serum is estimated to retain its properties for a good three years; but, so that it may be guaranteed efficacious for at least two, all stocks which have been held by chemists and dispensers for more than one year must be returned to the laboratory of issue, which undertakes to replace them with fresh supplies free of cost. This procedure far exceeds normal ethics in business, and often results in considerable loss by the serum laboratories, but it is certainly in line with the principles of humanity.

ONLY comparatively recently was it realised that snake serum could be satisfactorily used in the treatment of certain diseases. Snake poison kills by clotting the blood; thus, the very properties of snake venoms—that is, blood coagulation—which caused death, were employed to cure, or at least arrest, haemophilia. These chronic bleeders cannot be cured by ordinary operation, as the blood refuses to clot in the normal way; they would simply bleed to death.

Epilepsy, if not caused by grave lesions of the brain and central nervous system, or by irritation brought about by accident, alcoholism, sex abuses, or disease—is another malady that has been responding to treatment by anti-venin. And because there is a strong probability that nasal, abdominal, and other

operations may be similarly revolutionised, research continues into the relative therapeutic merits of all snake poisons. Venom extraction is now a regular operation at the London Zoo. From the thousands of miscellaneous serpents which inundated Melbourne Zoo when its director issued an appeal for a few more snakes, London's Zoo has received a specimen of each variety.

A question which quite naturally occurs to anyone reading this account is: Do snake-farm attendants, who move about among the reptiles, rely on anti-venin for their own immunisation? They receive it, though they do not entirely rely on it, but prefer to catch and handle the reptiles the safe way—with gauntlets and forked stick. The attendant most secure is, however, he who has been snake-bitten the most. The chief attendant on the Port Elizabeth farm has been bitten more often than he can remember. Now he is virtually exempt from risk, though, curiously enough, not from breeds which have not yet bitten him, nor from snakes not native to his own country.

Also, there is always a possibility that one deadly snake may be temporarily mistaken for another which is innocuous, though almost identical in appearance. Such an oversight is possible, even by an expert, so long as there exist, to give a single example, harmless species which, like chameleons, imitate both in appearance and habits some deadly varieties of the same region. That, I believe, was the experience of Dr Burgess Barnett of the London Zoo some years ago. Probably only the prompt application of the modern anti-toxins saved the life of this celebrated snake-specialist.

There is a popular fallacy that the mongoose obtains protective power against snake-bite by eating a specific plant. This proverbial immunity was the subject many years ago of a series of experiments in which a mongoose was matched with a deadly snake in a specially constructed pit. When struck, the speedy mongoose obtained its antidote in no other way than by crunching the reptile's head, thereby ingesting the same poison injected by the snake—self-inoculation, in fact, by a drastic and rough-and-ready adaptation of the anti-venin process.



The Silent Sentinel

G. E. C.

JOHNNIE stretched his feet to the wood-stove. 'I'm not settling to the lumber trade yet,' he said. 'I want to see a bit more of the world—and that bit more includes Wales.'

There was a sudden movement in the seat alongside the stove. 'Johnnie boy, take me too.' The old woman, who was his grandmother, gripped the arm of her chair. Her sunken brown eyes flashed with a light almost as bright as the burning logs. 'In my old age I've a desire to go home. My care isn't needed any more since your grandfather and father have both died; and you three grown up. You can manage your own lives now, you don't need your old Granny around.'

In consternation the three heard her. This frail, little old woman who hadn't stirred an inch during the cold British Columbia winter saying she must travel to Wales. 'Granny,' expostulated Johnnie to her eager pleading, patting the hand lying after long years idle on the arm of the chair, 'you're too old to move, and,' he added gently, 'we still need you around.'

'But old folk do travel, lad. Read your newspapers. And what do you all want me for, anyway?' was her teasing rejoinder. But there was fondness in the glance she gave this

tanned, young grandson—so long gone with the Canadian Army, she had missed him.

Her grandchildren hoped her enthusiasm would wear off. It didn't. Just as keen she remained to see Wales, once more; to die amongst her own race—that continued to be her desire. Finally they gave in to her repeated wish. Johnnie, it was agreed, should go and get the old home in order and Jacqueline bring her over later.

'What if the folk living there now don't want to move,' questioned Johnnie, preparing for eventualities, 'or the farmer won't sell or let the cottage to you?'

'I guess then I'll just have to put up with another cottage. There's not much difference in them.' But, a sigh escaping her, he knew she'd set her heart on "Garthan." Her correspondence had lapsed with the Welsh folk since the death of her parents many years back. Writing had always been a difficulty to her. She'd missed school too often as a child. 'When you and Jacqueline have settled your old Granny into "Garthan,"' she commented one day with a certain wistfulness, 'you can both return to Canada.'

'Yes, I guess we can,' replied Johnnie slowly, 'but I'm thinking of settling in Wales.'

The old woman brightened visibly at this.

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'A shepherd's life might suit you. Plenty of sheep there were on the hillside when I was young. Your great-grandfather was a shepherd. Sheep are for ever on the move. Yes, they'd suit you.'

He packed his belongings, and she began her packing, too, and rubbing up her Welsh. It bothered her to find how rusty it had grown. 'Gabbling language' her grandchildren, when small, called it, and it brought laughter out of them still to hear her.

The farewell day arrived. Johnnie shook hands with his elder brother, kissed his grandmother and sister, and waved good-bye to the wood house and the tall firs that bounded it on all sides.

As the great Pacific express tore along, doubts assailed him. His grandmother had not set foot outside their small acreage in British Columbia since her arrival fifty-five years ago. Had they done right in agreeing to this plan? But on board ship, out on the ocean, life was quieter. Leaning over the rail, Johnnie thought: 'If the weather is kind to her she'll enjoy this. A translucent sea of dancing waves high-spirited like herself.'

AFTER ten days the ship docked at Liverpool. From this port Johnnie's grandparents had sailed. It still caused him wonderment, that expedition of his grandparents. He could just picture his grandmother waiting to step aboard their boat, tightly clasping her shawl. He could never remember her without one.

In the train to Wales he got talking to his fellow-travellers about her. 'She's been mother and grandmother to me,' he told them. 'My mother died when I was a baby. A handful my grandmother had with my brother and sister and me. But she managed. She'd only got to say: "And who's coming along to Wcles for an hour?", and she'd have us sitting quiet as mice. Listening to her as a child gave me an urge to see Wales through my own eyes. They went as emigrants to Canada, my grandparents. They both came from the Welsh hills. After four years of married life my grandfather one day announced he'd like to emigrate, and he could give my grandmother no better reason than that a view wasn't satisfying enough; he must see beyond it. She knew to what my grandfather referred,' continued Johnnie to his interested fellow-travellers.

"A pass in the mountainside where hills begin their downward tumble to the valley, a valley of green pastureland and oak scrub ending with a grand expanse of sea—I never tired of that view," she told us children, "all ashimmer in the sunlight one day, misty maybe another, and yet again a clear-cut silhouette—coming rain, that meant. We would walk to this pass, your grandfather and I, work for the day over, and sit there with our silent thoughts, the sometime sun sinking between sky and sea. And the outcome . . . Canada. Shall I ever forget the homesickness and seasickness of that voyage?" she would sigh. "But your grandfather," she always concluded with cheerful loyalty to us children, "made money in the lumber trade." Yet I guessed she'd rather have had her view."

USED as Johnnie was to the Canadian Pacific express, the variety and shortness of this journey seemed strange. No sooner did the Welsh hills rear themselves than down they were felled, cut short by the sea.

Rare fairs had brought the hill-folk of his grandparents' young days down in their traps to buy and sell at the seaside town which his train drew into now, built within the curve of a Welsh bay. 'Would Granny be disappointed,' he wondered, 'at having to board a bus to carry her into the hills instead of the trap that took three hours of slow uphill walking?'

As the bus climbed the curly road to-day he grew silent with suppressed excitement, and when it reached the summit he turned. 'Certainly Granny did not overpaint its beauty,' he thought as he stared at a view which sent his grandfather to Canada. A wide silver band shone on the receding sea, and fitfully the sunlight chased shadows up and down the bare hillsides, and over the green valley, enlivening its grey, damp look. 'Yes, a style all its own has this country,' Johnnie mused, 'different from the Rockies and forests and those lands I saw during the war years.'

But regardless of the view the bus ran on and the hills, closing in, hid it. Through wide sheepwalk country went the bus, hills rolled back to mountains beyond, their tops lost in mist.

A line of cottages now came into sight, an old stone bridge crossing a river, a chapel perched up, and a lane that bent sideways. 'Her village,' thought Johnnie, eagerly gazing.

THE SILENT SENTINEL

'Why, she ought almost to be emerging from that lane, a basket on her arm for provisions.'

He turned to look for the shop as he climbed from the bus. Yes, yellow-washed, it stood above the river bank. The bus chugged along the main road and left him. He had dumped his heavy luggage in the town. 'I guess I'd better start right away to find "Garthan"', he decided, and gave a hitch to the light pack on his back. 'There'll be another two hours of daylight yet,' he judged, looking at the sky. 'I won't ask for directions but see if I remember Granny's. "Up the lane bearing to the right," she told us, "the river three fields below." Yes, that's it. "The river flows all the way and further," she said, "as good a guide as any."

A white cottage stood out in a field and caught his eye as he strode along. Across the river on the hillside were dotted white farms. In and out the sun still flitted, and up and up a skylark trilled. Sheep, those sheep she said he would like, lifted thin long faces from tough grass to stare into his and then, baaing to their lambs, they moved further afield.

Now the lane curled, and the river too. Scraggy hedges fell away and the lane became a track. Through a farmyard it took him, and he looked about with interest, but not much to be seen was there. Just a few hens, a cock, and a cow. 'The gates will be beginning soon,' he reckoned. 'How many had she said—dividing sheepwalks? Yes, five. That was it—to be opened and closed carefully behind one.'

The sheep eating grass on the hillside, their plaintive note calling one another, the murmuring river below and moving clouds above. Nothing much else. 'Lonely spirit of Wales,' he named it, with not a soul about. But the stone-built, sometimes white-washed, farms had friendly wreaths of smoke circling into the air.

Three gates he had opened and closed, and the track now dipped sharply and he crossed a mountain stream and, following the track upwards again, passed through another farm. Sheep, he supposed, were the main item in this country.

'It's a bit on the longish side this walk,' he felt. 'A bit monotonous this green, green land.' So into it his imagination painted a touch of red, a spirit of gaiety like the vanishing sunlight. 'No wonder Granny played truant from school sometimes,' he decided, as he pictured that little vision hastening ahead

in warm red cut from her mother's old flannel petticoat. 'A weary tramp it must have been for a small mite like her.'

After the fifth gate Johnnie quickened his pace. 'Garthan,' Granny once told him, meant encampment or line of battle. Round the next bend he should see this place where in the years gone by a battle must have been fought, and he took the bend at a run.

Yes, it was there, a dark outline on a hillock against a gathering misty background. He shouted 'Hurrah,' and waved his cap in the air. But it still lay half-a-mile away, and he ran as she had done on returning from school, hungry and eager for the meal her mother had waiting. 'For if hospitable folk live in it,' he thought, 'they'll give me a meal, too. I can just smell those hot loaves, the aroma of which on baking-days wafted down the green incline and wafted still further into my nostrils, as a small boy, merely listening.'

Nearer and nearer he drew, and once again he took his cap off and waved it in friendly greeting. Near enough at last for 'Garthan' to be plainly visible, he abruptly ceased running. No comfortable wisps of smoke waved in the air. To Johnnie it suggested not a live encampment but a sentinel, a sentinel who remains after the battle has passed over his body.

Straight and still it stood above him. Aloud in his disappointment, he called out: 'It's an empty cottage,' and slowly climbed the slope, all incentive gone. A board nailed where the door should have been, no glass in the windows. He swung himself over a sill, and inside it was damp and mouldy. 'I didn't expect a museum-piece,' he told himself, dismally looking round, 'but I'd hoped to find something of the old place intact. The oak dresser Granny talked about, with its rows of coloured jugs, or the old family rocker-cradle—not just an empty shell.'

He went and sat on the window-seat where Granny sat as a child when the rain swept the hillside and there was no going out. 'And I'd hoped for a welcome,' he moaned, 'and a meal.' And he looked at a rusty piece of iron in one bit of the wall. 'That must have been the oven.'

No rain swept by outside, but the countenance of the countryside had as mournful an expression as his own. The playing sunlight had gone and vapouring mist swirled about

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the hilltops, while the sides of the hills looked dark and forlorn. His gregarious nature felt the forlornness, sitting there, used as he was to the quiet of the woods. 'But trees can be companions,' he told himself. 'Hills and sheep, can they ever be? They look lost themselves to begin with, away from anywhere.'

Down below him he saw ridges of brown peat, uncared and lying there quite forgotten. 'We always burnt peat,' she had said, and he climbed out and went down to have a nearer look. 'Funny stuff,' he decided, picking it up and fingering it. 'I guess it doesn't burn as the logs do at home.'

He sat on a boulder then, and his thoughts returning to "Garthan" were plaintive like the call of the sheep. 'In Canada, now, it would be an easy matter to fix "Garthan" up again. Here I guess it's not so easy, but my appointment is nothing to what poor Granny's is going to be.'

Suddenly he sprang to his feet. Those sheep, which had been silent a while, had broken forth again scared by a dog on the opposite hill and by repeated whistlings of a man. 'A human being at last,' gasped Johnnie to himself. 'He may be able to give a bit of information about "Garthan".' He called, he whistled, as he jumped and waded through and over the boggy turf. But the shepherd made no sign, intent only on his sheep. He moved further and further out of Johnnie's view.

The mist was gathering in the whole mountainside and Johnnie thought it best to return before he, too, got caught in its toils. On to the track once more, and there he turned to have a last look at "Garthan" standing desolately on its green hillock.

The whole way back over and over in his mind he questioned the possibility of rebuilding "Garthan." At one of the farmhouses he stopped and knocked at the door. An old woman opened it. In some way she reminded

him of his Granny, but without her aliveness. A look about the brown eyes, or the way she clasped her shawl across her chest. She gabbled Welsh, but without the twang. She didn't understand a word of English and pointed several times up the hillside. 'Good-night' in Welsh was all he knew, and he said it sadly and walked on across a footbridge. 'If it's her son up there on that hill,' he thought, 'I'm not going on a second man-chase.'

DUSK had fallen when Johnnie reached the village. A boy told him at the Post Office that there was a letter for him. Johnnie looked surprised. Not a soul had he spoken to on climbing from the bus, and yet the village knew of his arrival. At the Post Office, a general-store shop, he collected the letter. It was an airmail from his sister. Johnnie read it, standing there, and then walked out. The news was a shock. He went and leant over the bridge. Below, the river caught murmuringly on to his thoughts, rippling them over the stones. 'She's not there any more—not by the stove, not by the stove—no use "Garthan," no use "Garthan",' and, still echoing back, the river eddied in and out of pools and splashed over stones and sped on down to the sea. 'All go the same way, all go the same way,' but now it seemed to be the river that took the lead, flinging out a note of comfort in its murmuring tone.

Johnnie raised his head after a while, looked away up the darkening valley, and felt less hurt. 'Perhaps it might have broken her heart to see "Garthan" in its present state,' he thought, 'but one day I'll come back and try to rebuild it as a memorial to her memory.'

But he could not stay without her. She was like the sun on the hills which had now gone. And he was not at all sure about those sheep. Did he like them? She had grown up with the sheep, but he with the trees.

Almond

*Cold the city,
Cold as doom;
But seashell-pretty
Bursts the bloom.*

*What life's thunder,
What death's doubt,
O flawless wonder—
Almond's out!*

CHARLES KELLIE.



Writing Up the Village

JOAN CURL

I WAS afraid we were in for it when the County Letter suggested that all Cheshire Women's Institutes might like to enter for a Scrap-book Competition, on the subject of 'Our Village.' As, however, no official comment was made, I thought possibly we were not going to do anything about it. I should have known better, because our secretary sees that we enter for everything, from Miniature Rock-Gardens to Nicely Arranged Tea-Tables.

Two months passed, and then we had a speaker down to talk about the idea, and really she made it all sound so easy and worth-while that I almost meant what I said in my vote of thanks. After that, things moved rapidly. A sub-committee was appointed on the spot, and a chairman and a secretary elected, which latter position, as I had foreseen, automatically came to include the appointments of chief researcher, writer, editor, typist, and photographer.

The County Federation had thoughtfully sent a list of questions to start us on our unaccustomed road. These were read out to the new and rather uncertain sub-committee. 'What is your place called? Do you know any older name for it? What field names can you collect? Are there any earthworks? Have you any singing games? Do you know

of any old agricultural implements? Can you get photographs of them? What industries have been in your place in the past?' and so on, for a whole page of typed foolscap, designed to loosen the tongue and stimulate the juices of memory, and indeed, to vary the metaphor, welcome as a lifebelt to a non-swimmer floundering in deep water. Now we knew what was wanted, and our practical minds rose to the occasion.

Field names? Mrs A reeled off those of the farm where she had worked as a dairymaid ('seven days a week') at the age of thirteen; they were a sober, sensible, unromantic lot, mostly consisting of Upper, Middle, and Lower, Great and Little, Near and Further, but they were a beginning, and the secretary joyfully noted them down.

Singing games? Not exactly, but Miss B could get the words and tune of the Pace-Egging Song—and wasn't there a Bonfire Song too? Miss B would look into it.

As for our name, well, King Canute gave us that, whatever the experts may say nowadays. His head is inside every book in the Public Library, and there is 'Canute Square' too, just to prove it. And don't they say that he started the old custom of sanding, still practised, here and nowhere else, on May Day? And then, of course, there's May Day

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—*Royal* May Day—and we mustn't forget Mrs Gaskell. As if we could, for our little town had greatness thrust upon it when it became the model for 'Cranford' just one hundred years ago.

So there we were. We shared out the suggested sections—industries, agriculture, famous citizens, natural history, local customs, and a good many more.

A MONTH later we met again and compared notes on the prodigious amount of work that had been put in by some of us. We had spent hours in the reference-libraries of Chester and Manchester, and we had at least skipped through all the local books that our librarian could unearth. We had tried to concentrate on tithe maps and schedules in the vestry while the organ thundered all around us during its Saturday practice. We had interviewed old inhabitants, and tried to guide their flood of reminiscence into helpful channels. We had questioned farmers and teachers, craftsmen, gamekeepers, lodge-keepers, and daily helps, the latter in the nick of time, for mine left immediately after a long session on Life in the Old Market-Place, where her parents had kept a now-demolished pub. The Town Clerk had obliged with a list of dates of interesting buildings, among which was included the Gas Works, and had allowed us to consult maps at the Council Offices.

There was no visible progress to report to the third meeting, but we knew that the back of the task was broken. The little heaps of odd paper—the backs of bills, of letters, of rejection-slips—covered with notes, were accumulating under the different headings—Mrs Gaskell, The Heath, The Market-Place, The Church, Communications. More headings were continually suggesting themselves as the amount of information grew.

Meanwhile a few tangible exhibits had appeared. One member brought some 19th-century photographs of the town, which we had copied. Another produced an 1820 sampler, and the purple silk, ivory-handled parasol once used in the Gaskell family. A third lent us some newspaper-cuttings, yellow with age and incredibly lengthy, referring to famed Cranfordians, from the highwayman to the Prince Consort's tailor, from the black-pudding maker who numbered the Prince Regent among her customers to the prison

reformer who left his fortune to Queen Victoria—for we are nothing if not royally minded!

We had our disappointments, of course. The estate-office of our chief landlord would have nothing to do with us. The Institute as a whole was not interested, and an open meeting to collect information, anecdotes, and reminiscences was only attended by two members. We had one resignation, which threw yet more work upon the survivors. Still, too many cooks spoil the broth, and the trustfulness with which the other sub-committee members left the editing to the head-cook and bottle-washer certainly avoided the friction experienced by some other Institutes in the compiling of their scrap-books.

SLOWLY the work went on throughout the spring and summer, with a meeting every month to report progress. The sheaves of notes began to take shape, the first section being put together during a snowy Easter week-end in the Duddon Valley, and the last on a Devon beach in August.

Finally, the practical details had to be settled. The actual book was produced, a throw-out from the chairman's husband's firm; it was a large loose-leaf affair with green cloth covers and a stack of beautiful paper. The secretary did the typing at a friend's office after hours; a member's brother undertook the lettering on the cover; the chairman obtained two maps, which she glued on the inner side of the covers.

Then at last chairman and secretary spent two happy evenings with gummed corners, mounting-tape, electric-iron, and guillotine, trimming and sticking in the photographs ancient and modern, and captioning them in indian-ink.

Our final meeting was held to show the admiring committee the results of the six-months' effort, and then the precious book was motored in to County Headquarters and handed over. During September, October, and November we tried to forget it, like students whose exam results are not expected for months. Meanwhile, with sixty-eight other scrap-books from all over Cheshire, it was taken to London for judging by a Standing Committee on Local History.

AND now the results are out, and we are not among the winners. We are dis-

THE SIGN OF THE KITE

appointed, of course, but we have at least spent an interesting summer, and what we don't know about our district can hardly be worth bothering about. We can now provide a real-life counterpart for almost every character in 'Cranford.' We can trace the growth of our section of A50 from a mere lane to the most consistently busy stretch of road in all England. We know everything about the Great Gas-Lamp Scandal, and

where the ducking-pond used to be, and what happened to the town-crier who was drunk on duty.

Even now the ever-busy County Federation will not let us sink back into obscurity, clutching our luckless scrap-book like an unwanted baby. They are demanding typed and carbon copies, with a view to publishing a giant Cheshire Scrap-book—so there is yet more work ahead for someone!

The Sign of the Kite

The Work of the British Standards Institution

T. S. DOUGLAS

UTILITY has gone and with it the CC41 mark which was stamped on clothing, household textiles, footwear, and bedding that conformed to certain standards and could be sold in Britain free of tax. Taking the place of CC41 is the kite mark of the British Standards Institution, and the formalised kite of our boyhood, with the letters BS, will become as familiar as the Utility mark, probably a great deal more familiar, for British Standards cover a very much wider range of articles and have long been a guarantee all the world over that certain clearly stated standards have been observed in manufacture.

A 'standard' can apply to an article in a number of different ways. The standard may have reference to the quality of the materials, to the methods or workmanship in manufacture, and even to the size of the article, which is the sense in which many people use the word 'standard.' The specialists divide standards into functional and dimensional, functional standards covering specifications of quality, composition, or performance, the fitness for its purpose of an article, and the dimensional standards cover-

ing exact sizes, generally concerned with the question of ensuring simplicity and interchangeability.

British Standards include both these in an extraordinary range of articles. The dimensional standards are not limited to steel girders, screws, nuts and bolts, and the like, although these are of immense importance, but also cover such things as clothing. The standard BS 40/38 on an article of women's clothing, for instance, means 40-inch hips and 38-inch bust, and is very different from the 'Outsize,' 'Small woman,' or more often Size 5 or Size 6, which is used to describe clothing, and which may vary to a very great extent.

The advantages of standards of this kind are obvious, although standards are not always easy to reach. For example, standards of this nature for footwear might involve a fairly complicated series of cross measurements, but there is the enormous advantage over the 'size 10 wide fitting' type of standard that once a man or woman knew their feet in terms of a British Standard they would be able to buy shoes with confidence, even without fitting.

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Functional and dimensional standards may, of course, work together. Size is not the only thing that matters in clothing. The quality of the cloth and the details of making-up, from the number of stitches to the inch to the size of seams, the method of sewing on the buttons, all count and can be embraced by a BS. And the fixing of standards means going further. Just as for dimensional standards we must have a standard yard, gallon, and so on, so for standards in workmanship there must be definitions of the processes. Thus for clothing, exactly what is meant by the terms lock-stitch, chain-stitch, a flat-felled seam, and a hundred other things is precisely defined.

THE idea of standards goes back to the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution, but it was not until the end of the 19th century that standards began to be seriously considered. The disadvantages of lack of standards were already apparent in many directions. Britain had had her battle of the railway-gauges and the matter had been settled, although the lesson had not been learned in other countries, and Australia to-day suffers inconvenience and waste through having different gauges.

The impetus to the formation of an institution that could lay down standards came from Mr H. J. Skelton, an engineer and steel merchant. His experience showed him that structural-steel sections were made in a vast and unnecessary number of different sizes, that the number of sizes was increasing, and that the only real reason for them was the absence of any standards for engineers and draughtsmen. He studied the waste, inconvenience, and higher cost that arose through this multiplicity of sizes and eventually sent a letter to the *Times* in 1895. 'In this country no two professional men are agreed upon the size and weight of girder to employ for given work,' he wrote, 'and the British manufacturer is everlastingly changing his rolls or appliances at greatly increased cost of manufacture to meet the irregular, unscientific requirements of professional architects and engineers.'

From this letter sprang the Engineering Standards Committee in 1901, formed by all the leading professional associations. In 1918 this was incorporated as the British Engineering Standards Association, and in

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1931 its name was changed to the British Standards Institution. One immediate effect was the reduction in the sizes of structural-steel sections from 175 to 113 and of tramway-rails from 75 to 5. In the first twelve years of its life the Committee issued only sixty specifications, although these were of far-reaching importance, and about 95 per cent of the steel produced in Britain conformed to them. After 1918, however, the work of what had now become the Association grew prodigiously. In the next few years, reports and standards appeared at the rate of thirty a year. The scope of the work was greatly extended after 1931 and the average number of standards produced a year became ninety. To-day the Institution occupies a six-storey block and its work covers virtually the whole of industry.

Over the years the Institution has developed close relations with other bodies concerned with standards in the Commonwealth and in the United States. Every draft British specification is sent to each of the Dominions for their consideration, and their recommendations are taken into account in drafting the final specification. As a result, there is a remarkable amount of standardisation throughout the Commonwealth, with benefit to all concerned.

The extent to which other countries use British Standards varies, but in the case of New Zealand about 700 out of 800 standards are British. But quite apart from whether his own country uses the same standard, an overseas buyer has the advantage that with the very detailed British Standard specification in front of him he knows exactly what he is buying. It produces the same sort of confidence and simplicity that doctors enjoy as a result of the standardisation of drugs and dosages in a pharmacopoeia.

THE British Standards Institution is not a Government organisation and has no compulsory powers. The cost of running it is shared between industry and commerce and the Government in equal amounts, but one-third of its income is derived from sales of published standards. The present cost is about £250,000 a year. It is controlled by a General Council made up of representatives of industry, the Board of Trade, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Association of British Chambers of

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Commerce, and other bodies. Below this, and electing members to the Council, are Divisional Councils representing engineering, chemicals, building, textiles, various and miscellaneous undertakings. The basis of the whole organisation are committees which draft the standard specifications, made up of commercial and technical specialists in the particular subject concerned. They represent the user and distributor as well as the producer, and, of course, where standards being considered by one committee might affect those of another there is close liaison.

Thus an industry is responsible for its own standards, but clearly the benefits of standardisation may go far beyond that particular industry. In the near future the number of standards is likely to increase and to cover an ever-widening field. For instance, recently the Institution has been asking the hundreds of manufacturers of electric-toasters to agree on tests which would result in the production of a standard for a safe, efficient toaster, one that will still be working satisfactorily after making at least 1000 pieces of toast and will be safe even after it has been dropped a number of times.

The work of an organisation that started out simply to standardise steel girders and rails has, indeed, become so extensive that it is difficult to think of any common article that it has not touched in some way, the aim always being to ensure good quality, easy interchangeability and fitting, and safety. The reduction in the number of unnecessary sizes

in all sorts of things has been astonishing. As an example, the types of tubs used in collieries have been reduced from 3000 to 17. In a few cases the adoption of standards is compulsory by law, generally for reasons of health or safety. In the vast majority of cases, however, the acceptance of a standard put forward by a committee picked from amongst the 13,000 men and women available is voluntary. If the Institution finds that a standard is not being widely adopted, it means there is something wrong and the matter is reconsidered—one of the great advantages of the voluntary system. Old standards are constantly being revised as circumstances and materials change.

One of the triumphs of the British Standards Institution was, after years of hard work, to secure agreement with Canada and the United States on the standardisation of screw threads. It involved compromise all round, but the value of the achievement can be judged from the fact that it is estimated that at least £25,000,000 would have been saved if agreement on this matter had been reached before the War.

The replacement of Utility by the mark of the kite is likely to bring the British Standards Institution more into the public eye. It has never courted publicity and new standards have been introduced in the industries concerned without any flourish of trumpets. Now the sign of the kite will come to be accepted as a mark of good value for money, of reliability, and of safety.

Rejection Slip

*Life has sore trials for the struggling bard.
'Well, then, stop struggling,' cal'ous cynics say,
'And take perhaps to plumbing, which will pay,
And prove that piping need not be so hard.'
Oh, mercenary scoffers, take a hint—
It is not wealth we warble to attain,
But just to see our Muse, however plain,
Presented to the world in comely print.
Spurred by sharp-rowelled failures, on we go,
Consoled by conscious worth, proud thralls of art,
Yet gnawed by our awareness of the woe
We wake in many an editorial heart,
Submitting jewels which are seldom set
And whose return not we alone regret.*

W. K. HOLMES.



Silk Shop

M. O. DENCH

LABHOO the silk-merchant was expecting two of his best customers. He leaned forward and whisked away the flies which buzzed round the open front of his shop. 'Ai, Amir,' he called out to his food-vendor friend next door. 'Will you please keep your flies at home.'

Amir called back: 'If your fusty cottons smell stronger than my delicacies, can I help it?'

It was in a sense a misfortune for Labhoo that his shop happened to be last in the street of silks and adjoined the eating-stalls, but this was offset by the fact that, if last, it was also first as one approached the old city.

Peering round the wooden partition, Labhoo could see the swarm of flies which hovered above trays of sweetmeats and steaming bowls of curry on Amir's open stall. How much do you charge your customers for the flies?' he inquired rudely.

'They are free. How many do you want?' Amir retorted instantly.

To-day, Labhoo's finest wares were on view. He was an accomplished showman, and the stage was set. Over a screen at one side he had spread a roll of Bokhara silk, dull-red shot with purple, and near it was displayed a length of sage-green velvet. By way of contrast to

these sombre colourings he had arranged a fold of gold brocade on the platform where the sun, beating down between tall houses from an unclouded sky, seemed to hammer sparks from the gold until Labhoo's own accustomed eyes began to water.

What effect would it have on the wife of the Police Inspector? The Bibi Sawari had been a great beauty, but now she was middle-aged and fat. She struggled to preserve a semblance of youth with the aid of cosmetics and rare silks, which would have been perfect for Labhoo's purpose if she had been as rich as she was vain.

He crouched in the shadow, waiting like a patient relentless spider for the Inspector's wife. He had his own technique. First he would show her the Bokhara silk, knowing that were she so foolish as to wear it she would thereby double her ample girth. Then he would casually draw forward the sage-green, a colour which could be relied on to make her sallow face appear jaundiced. By this time she would be in a temper and he would permit her to see and handle the gold brocade, knowing that the price he intended to quote was beyond her purse.

When her eyes were sufficiently dazzled, and her temper sufficiently high, he would allow

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her to pry into his inner sanctum where, among a pile of printed cottons, he had secreted a certain roll of silk. It was extravagantly beautiful. Its lustre was that of a peacock's breast; in texture it was a miracle of softness and flexibility; and in colour it was a deep blush-rose.

As he thought about the silk, Labhoo had a mental vision of it transformed into a sari, edged with an intricate embroidery of seed-pearls, and between the folds the plump yellow cheeks of the Bibi Sawari.

The vision made him laugh aloud, and brought the sweet-vendor's face round the side of the partition. 'What amuses you, Labhoo-ji?'

Labhoo was about to divulge the source of his mirth, when he heard a loud honking. It was the noise a klaxon-horn makes when pressed by the arrogant and insistent thumb of a Punjabi taxi-driver. He waved away Amir's perspiring countenance and took a pull at the stem of his hookah, once more flicked away the flies, and then rose prepared to greet his customer.

THE car which had brought the Bibi had difficulty in threading a way through the crowded street and could not penetrate as far as the silk shop. This disappointed Labhoo, as a waiting car was a form of advertisement for which someone else had to pay. The Bibi was compelled to alight at Amir's food-stall and she wrinkled her once-shapely nose, studded with filigree silver, as she smelled the pungent bowls of curry. Her physician had forbidden rich food and she resented both sight and smell of the enticement.

She mopped her face as she struggled up the three steps to the platform and sank down complaining among her draperies on the chair Labhoo had placed in readiness. 'Ai, it's hot!' she said peevishly. 'Now, what have you to show me?'

'Beautiful and rare things, Bibi-sahib. I have procured the finest silks in India,' he told her.

'You're a liar and a scoundrel,' she said, rubbing fingers against thumb impatiently. 'Come on, come on, show me.'

Labhoo drew forward a fold of the Bokhara silk.

'Too heavy. Is it for this you bring me out in the heat of the day?'

'This green velvet, Bibi-ji?'

'Velvet! Do you want me to sweat to emaciation?'

Labhoo concealed a smile. 'Cold weather is coming,' he reminded her.

'Not yet, and the velvet is a hideous colour.' She was eyeing the gold brocade. 'Show me that.'

Labhoo further uncoiled the roll and flourished it before her. 'See, Bibi-sahib.'

Bibi Sawari was clearly moved. She was silent, picturing her own face and form swathed in that silken sunlight. If she could wear such a fabric at the forthcoming official reception she would be the most strikingly-dressed woman there and would outshine even the Begum Tulwar. 'How much a yard?' she inquired reflectively.

'Only twenty-two rupees, Sahiba.'

'You thief!' she spat. 'You paid no more than ten rupees for it from the caravan traders.'

'This is no Persian silk,' he whined. 'This is French, very expensive to import.'

Bibi Sawari was now in a fury and was hissing that she would never again enter Labhoo's shop and would transfer her custom to his rival Chandra Das, further from the vile smells of the cooking-stalls.

Labhoo heard her in silence, pretending humility. Now was the time ripe to let her see the rose silk while she was blinded by the combined effect of rage and dazzlement by sun and sheen.

'Have you nothing in your dog-kennel fit to wear?' the Bibi stormed.

Labhoo had been kneeling humbly among his silks, but now he stood and spoke with downcast eyes. 'My shop is yours, Sahiba. If the Excellency will condescend to search among my poor wares?'

Bibi Sawari rose heavily and waddled into the inner room, blinking in the sudden transition from full sunlight to gloom. 'I can't see in this rat-hole,' she grumbled.

Labhoo allowed her to fumble among the cottons until she encountered the rose silk, and her hand, jingling with bracelets at the wrist, paused. Then she pulled out the roll and let a long fold hang down, and immediately it was illuminated by the shaft of sunlight, vibrating with dust, which penetrated the opening. 'What price?'

Labhoo had heard her inhale audibly at sight of the silk and was in no hurry to reply.

'How much a yard?' Her voice rose in a tremor of impatience.

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'Very cheap. I make absolutely no profit on this, Bibi-ji. I swear to you . . .'

'Was that why you hid it?'

Labhoo pretended to be abashed.

'Stop your rascality and tell me the price,' she demanded.

'Sixteen rupees a yard.'

Sixteen—and she would need ten yards—but it would be worth it if this delicate rose colour made her look young again, younger than the Begum Tulwar. She could have it fashioned into a sari in time for the reception—perhaps with an edging of seed-pears.

'It's criminal,' she said at last, 'and you deserve to be hung. I will tell my husband to have you arrested for extortion.'

The silk-merchant smiled. He knew he had won.

Bibi Sawari continued: 'Measure me a sari length.'

Labhoo was too much of an artist to spoil the moment with speech. He bowed and, taking his rod, he measured yard by shimmering yard and slowly began to cut.

'There is much still in the roll,' Bibi Sawari said suspiciously. 'No doubt you will sell a length each to wives of other high officials.' The name of Begum Tulwar was in her mind.

'Nay, Sahiba. I swear on the beard of my great-grandfather that I will send the remainder to my brother in Delhi. Among his clients he has the noblest in the land. This silk will grace only those who sup at the tables of princes.'

Bibi Sawari ponderously descended the

steps and picked her way through pi-dogs and children and dust to the waiting car.

THE taxi-driver came running to Labhoo for the parcel. 'I trust your purse is heavier,' he said significantly.

Labhoo opened his cash-box with a sigh and extracted an eight-anna piece. 'There goes the full extent of my profit,' he said resignedly.

Once again he draped the purple-red Bokhara silk over the screen and placed next to it the sage-green velvet, but in place of the gold brocade he brought out the remainder of the rose silk, pulling it forward to the edge of the platform as the sunlight had shifted. The gold brocade he rolled up and placed among the cottons in the back room, at the same time substituting the respective prices of the silks in his mind. Then he sat down and took a long pull at his hookah, after which he automatically whisked away the flies.

Amir's face appeared round the partition. 'Did you rob the Inspector's wife satisfactorily, Labhoo-ji?' he inquired.

'I am a poor simpleton, who makes no profit,' Labhoo replied complacently.

He waited in tranquillity for his other good customer. The Begum was more sophisticated than the Bibi, but the same technique would serve. Women's competitive vanity was ever his principal asset and he felt confident that the ageing Begum Tulwar would not be able to resist the gold brocade.

The Unforgotten

*Still with insidious night does she encroach
Upon the sun of my new-ordered day,
And, all my world awry, I but reproach
This weakling will that turns her not away.
How shrewdly she besets me from the past
With pleasing shade that will not be denied;
Renews old claims at my subservient last,
And wages wilful battle with my pride.
So all emotions each from each dissent,
While heavy eyes 'gainst cool resolve conspire.
Nor may I bid the restless hours relent,
To flood with sleep this enigmatic fire,
For these, her allies, unremittingly
Proclaim in dull advance her victory.*

ARTHUR TURCK.



Scrap Trond *Salvaging an Ancient Church*

GARRY HOGG

IF you take the main road north out of Oslo, Norway's glittering and lovely city, you will reach soon the gentle Gudbrandsdal. You will pass quickly through Jessheim, whose sole petrol-station, even at close quarters, looks more like a dairy than anything else, with its clean, trim, white buildings and pumps. You will come, after two hours' driving, to Minnesund, at the southern tip of Norway's largest lake, Mjösa; and, two hours later, to Lillehammer, at the northern tip of this same lake. Lillehammer's long level bridge bestrides the water at the point where the ice-waters of Gudbrandsdal flow into the lake. After this, a succession of hamlets and modest townships lie on your route till the road forks at Otta. Here you may either continue northwards to Trondheim and almost to the Arctic Circle itself; or you may branch westwards on a smaller road, which will lead you into the Jotunheim, the Home of the Giants.

You will not reach the mountains of the Jotunheim that same day, but you will follow a tumbling river of green-tinged soda-water startlingly cold to the touch even in the height of summer; and the air you breathe, even on the hottest days, will have a whiff of mountain

ice in it that will constrict your nostrils. Westwards of Otta, there lie the tiny lost hamlets, strung out like dark wooden beads on the white thread of your unmetalled road—Garmo, and Lom, and Tessanden, and Vågå, and others too small, it would seem, to have a name of their own on any tourist map.

Dark wooden beads, rather than bright glass or semi-precious stones, is the simile, for their few houses are almost all of the dark, weathered timber that grew once in Norway's limitless forests. Cottage and school and store and farmstead and church—all are built of this same dark pine. The corners are laid in log-cabin style, butt-ended, four-square to the wind and snow that fill this empty landscape for the greater part of every year. And westwards again there is only Elvesteter, a vast sprawling caravanserai poised above the roaring Bövra and beneath the snow-capped summit of Galdhöppiggen—one timber-built, double-glazed hotel, and nothing more at all. That is the threshold to the Sognefjell Road, Norway's highest mountain-road, which is open to traffic for a few months only of the year.

It was in one of these snug-lying valley

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villages, Vågå, that there lived, some sixty years ago, Trond Eklestuen, 'Scrap' Trond, as he had come to be known in the district and further afield, for he had embarked about that time upon a lifetime's pursuit of salvage. He lived, and is remembered still, in a land of timber—a land of larch and pine and spruce and birch. Moreover, he lived in Gudbrandsdal, where stone and brick are hardly more used to-day than in the days when the first goatherds settled there, before the heyday of the Vikings—in Gudbrandsdal, where the thousand-year-old tradition in joinery is most magnificently exemplified in the ancient *stavkirke* in which the dalesmen worship. Assuredly the story of Scrap Trond deserves telling.

NEARLY a thousand years ago Norway's St Olav called on a substantial dale farmer with the high-sounding name of Torgeir the Ancient and bade him build a church by the waterside. Torgeir gathered about him the fine timber craftsmen whose brothers built the long-ships that ploughed the Atlantic before Columbus, and soon the church was built, and consecrated by the saint himself. It was among the very first of Norway's *stavkirker*, and long before the Normans, who were once Norsemen themselves, had won the Battle of Hastings, the *stavkirke* was in regular use, and remained in active use until it was dismantled some seventy years ago.

But timber has a life that may outlast the fabric for which it was felled, and when the church was dismantled the timber that had gone to its making was put up for auction. The mast-like pine columns, the great yard-arms that had supported its roof, the sturdy king-posts, and the thick, unwarped planking that had been floor and balcony, together with the myriad tarred wooden shingles that had made up the far-spreading roof beneath the dragon-heads that protect both church gable and long-ship stempost—these were sold in lots large and small to farmers and husbandmen along the length and breadth of Gudbrandsdal.

It is here that Scrap Trond comes into the picture. More enlightened than his fellows, he realised that what had been built by Torgeir the Ancient at the bidding of St Olav was now being scattered far and wide at the bidding of those who attended the auction.

So, the inspiration came to him to set about, single-handed, the salvaging of that dismantled *stavkirke*.

It took him more than twenty years. You may picture him, from 1882 to the opening of the new century, tirelessly scouring the isolated farmsteads of that long and lovely valley, his eye alert for identifiable *stavkirke* timbers. How many a keen bargain must he have struck with those farmers, promising them newly-felled timber within such and such a time if they would forgo their right to some great rafter or truss or door-jamb or floor-joist, and allow him to carry it away to swell his growing scrap-heap. How his spirits must have sunk when he entered some lowly dwelling and found the hearth fuelled with the tarred fish-scale shingles that had once kept rain and snow from the heads of those worshipping in the *stavkirke* Torgeir the Ancient had built. And with what elation must he have regarded the swelling mound of seasoned timber as the years went by, even though he may hardly have known how he was to set about making use of it.

Then, he found an ally. An enterprising young dentist, Anders Sandvig, was accepting pieces of Gudbrandsdal ware—turned bowls, carved and painted woodwork, and woven fabrics—as payment for his services in the remoter parts of the valley. He met Scrap Trond and recognised in him a kindred spirit. Together they concentrated on the salvaging of the last remains of the ancient church. Where timber had been burnt or cut down for fencing, they matched it with comparable pieces from other dilapidated churches; and at last the time came when the two men, the dentist, Anders Sandvig, and the indefatigable dealer in scrap, Trond Eklestuen, knew their labours were to bear full fruit. In Lillehammer, at the foot of Gudbrandsdal, a site was picked and cleared, and on it skilled men rebuilt the ancient *stavkirke*.

Twenty years after the beginning of this century the last of the shingles, dark as plug-tobacco, was slipped into place on the roof and the new-old *stavkirke* was complete. On St Olav's day, 1921, the church, built by Torgeir the Ancient and miraculously rescued through the piety of Scrap Trond, was consecrated for the second time. You may stand within the resin-scented shade of its timber walls, as I myself did not so very long ago, and think yourself within a forest of hallowed pine.



Never Trust a Lady

VICTOR CANNING

EVERYONE who knew Horace Denby thought that he was an honest, decent, respectable citizen. In business he gave a square deal and a reasonable discount, and he was always good for a subscription to the choral society and the boys' club.

He was a bachelor, somewhere in the early fifties, and lived with a shrivelled-up house-keeper who thought the world of him and worried over his health, especially his hay-fever which he got badly in June and July.

Usually, however, he looked the picture of health—pink-faced, a little plump, a gentle spring to his walk and a warm glow in his eyes. He was an ironmonger and locksmith, and prosperous enough to employ two assistants. A decent, respectable citizen—but not entirely honest.

It was fifteen years since the prison chaplain—when Horace had served his first and only sentence for a jewel robbery—had tried to straighten Horace out. He liked Horace—everyone did—and wanted to help him, but Horace was unconcerned about his dishonesty. He was only concerned with handling it so that it never got him into trouble again.

HORACE had not liked prison. The food disagreed with him. He didn't get

enough exercise, and the books in the prison library were uninteresting and dog-eared. It was this last that turned Horace's stomach—for the reason he broke open a safe once a year was to have money to buy expensive first editions. He had a mania, too, for rare books, but he bought them discreetly through an agent and financed his purchases with an annual robbery which—after his one disagreeable experience of prison—he planned very carefully indeed.

As he walked now in the bright sunshine up the country lane that led to Shotover Grange he felt confident, for everything this year had, as usual, been meticulously planned. For two weeks—his annual holiday—he had been walking the country around the Grange and he knew everything about the house, its electrical-wiring layout, its drainage, and the furnishings and disposition of all the rooms.

The two servants, Ethel and Mrs Crimp, were alone in the house while the family were in London. This afternoon—strictly against orders—they had taken the local bus to go to the cinema. All this Horace knew, and he felt remarkably happy, though the scent from the new-cut hay made his nose tickle a little. The weight of the rucksack on his back was a pleasurable burden, since it contained all his tools.

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THERE was about £15,000 worth of jewels in the Grange safe—quite a reasonably safe safe, Horace thought, except for a man like himself—and, broken down, he would get about £5000 for the lot. . . . Enough to make him happy for another year. There was an edition of Rabelais, printed at Lyons by Jean Martin in 1558, in first-class condition, coming up for sale this autumn and two illuminated French Books of Hours which he wanted.

He took the field-path to the house and found the key to the kitchen-door. Mrs Crimp had left it suspended on a string inside the water-tank. He wiped the key dry on his handkerchief, pulled on a pair of gloves, and opened the door. Fingerprints for a man with a conviction were fatal. One of his rare fears was of walking in his sleep and suddenly waking to find himself working on a safe without gloves.

There was a spaniel curled up in Mrs Crimp's chair in the kitchen. It stirred, gave him a panting laugh and thumped its stub of a tail.

'All right, Sherry.' Horace scratched the dog's head as he passed. Dogs, he thought, were easy. Just give them their right name and a little love. A quotation from Piers Plowman came into his mind—'As courteous as a dog in a kitchen.' One day, maybe, he would have enough money to collect the really old Anglo-Saxon stuff.

The safe was in the drawing-room, concealed behind a not very good copy of a Roualt. Horace lifted it down and found himself regretting momentarily that he could not collect pictures. They took up so much room. Books were handier in a small house.

It was a nice drawing-room, very elegant with Regency furniture and bright with sunshine that flooded in through windows that overlooked a formal rose-garden. The air was full of the scent of a great bowl of roses on the table, and Horace felt his nose twitch and tickle. He gave a little sneeze and then slipped off his rucksack. He took his time, arranging his tools deliberately. It would be four hours before the servants returned.

As he had thought, the safe was not going to give him any trouble. He had lived with locks and safes all his life. They were like human beings. They all had some weakness which could be exploited profitably. The burglar-alarm running from the safe had been put in badly. He went into the hall to disconnect it. Not that it mattered much, for

the bell could have rung its head off and no one would have heard, but he liked to be methodical. He came back and sneezed loudly as the rose-scent hit him again.

PEOPLE with valuable possessions, mused Horace, as he stood in front of the safe deciding his method of attack, were so injudicious. Vanity was their downfall. There had been an illustrated article in a magazine on this house, giving a plan of the whole layout and pictures of the main rooms. The writer had even mentioned the picture masking the safe.

Horace shook his head sadly and turned back for his tools. As he bent down for them he found himself sneezing again. He straightened up, burying his face in his handkerchief. Then, as the fit passed, he heard a voice say quietly from the doorway: 'What is it? A cold, or hay-fever?'

Horace turned round in surprise and, before he could stop himself, had said: 'Hay-fever,' and then found himself sneezing again.

When he had finished, the voice went on: 'You can cure it with injections, you know—especially if you find out what your particular allergy is. I'd recommend you to do that if you're serious about your profession. I heard you from the top of the house just now.'

It was a quiet, humorous voice, but not without a firmness which, given cause, could drive out the humour, and it came from a woman standing in the doorway with the spaniel, Sherry, fawning beside her. She was young, quite pretty, and dressed in a red suit.

SHE walked across the room to the mantelshelf and straightened one of the ornaments. The spaniel went after her, jumping up excitedly. 'Down, Sherry,' she said. 'Anyone would think I had been away a month.' She turned and smiled at Horace, and went on: 'However, it seems I've come back at the right moment. I didn't expect to meet a burglar.'

There was a twinkle in her eyes that gave Horace some hope. If he handled things properly, he thought, he might yet avoid trouble. He gave her a tentative smile and said: 'And I didn't expect to meet a householder.'

She nodded. 'I can see how annoying it is for you. What are you going to do?'

NEVER TRUST A LADY

'My first thought was to run for it,' Horace confessed.

'You could, of course. But I should telephone the police and give them your description. They'd pick you up very quickly.'

Horace rubbed his chin and then said blandly: 'I should, of course, disconnect the telephone first and then—' he hesitated before going on, a broad smile on his face, 'make sure that you'd be in no position to do anything for some time. A few hours' grace would be enough.'

For a moment she eyed him seriously. 'You'd use violence?'

Horace paused for a while before replying, and then he said: 'Perhaps I was trying to frighten you.'

'You haven't succeeded.'

Horace shrugged his shoulders. 'It would be nicer,' he said, 'if you would forget about the whole thing. Just let me pack up and go.'

'Why should I?' The voice was suddenly sharp and humourless. 'You were going to rob me. If I let you go you'll only rob someone else. Society must be protected against men like you.'

Horace smiled faintly. 'I must admit,' he said, 'that I'd never seen myself as a menace to society. I only steal from those who can afford it.'

'A Modern Robin Hood!' There was a sardonic twist to her mouth, but the humour was back in her voice.

'That's it,' Horace agreed eagerly. 'I assure you I steal only in a good cause. And I do so hate the thought of prison.'

SHE laughed outright, and Horace pressed his advantage. 'Look, I know I've no right to ask anything from you . . . but I'm up against it. Let me go, and I promise never to do this kind of thing again. I really mean it.'

She was silent for a while, watching him closely. Then she said quietly: 'You really are scared of going to prison, aren't you?' She stood up abruptly and came over to him, shaking her head. 'The trouble with me,' she said, 'is that I always like the wrong kind of

people.' She picked up a silver box from the table beside her and took a cigarette.

Horace, eager to please, seeing that she was disposed to help him, whipped off his gloves and brought out his lighter. 'You'll let me go?' He held the flame towards her.

'Yes—but only if you'll do something for me.'

'Anything you say.'

'I'm in trouble with my husband. Before we went away I promised to take my jewels to our London bank, but I left them here in the safe. I've got to wear them to-night at a party so I came down to fetch them, but like a fool—'

Horace waved a hand gallantly, smiling. 'But, like a woman, you've forgotten the combination, haven't you?'

'Yes.'

'A pleasure. Leave it to me and you shall have them within an hour. I shall make a mess of your safe, though.'

'Don't bother about that. My husband won't be back here for a month, and I'll have it repaired.'

And within an hour Horace had handed the jewels to her and hiked happily away.

FOR just two days Horace contemplated keeping his word to her. But on the morning of the third day the thought of the books he still wanted was too strong. He knew he would have to look for another safe.

He never got a chance. At lunch-time he had visitors—a detective-inspector and a constable. Horace was arrested for the jewel robbery at Shotover Grange.

His fingerprints—for he had worked without gloves in his virtuous enthusiasm—were all over the safe, and no one believed his story of the wife of the owner of the house asking him to open the safe for her. The wife herself—a grey-haired, sharp-featured woman of sixty—testified that the tale was nonsense.

Horace is working out his sentence as assistant prison librarian. He often thinks of the charming, quick-witted young lady who was in the same profession as himself and who took advantage of him. It makes him really mad when anyone talks about honour among thieves.

Twice-Told Tales

XXVII.—Mankind to the Railway Barmaid

[From *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* of March 1853.]

MANKIND is composed of great herds of rough-looking persons, who occasionally rush with frightful impetuosity into our refreshment-rooms, calling for cups of coffee, and hot brandy and water, which they tumble into themselves scalding, and pay for in furious haste; after which they rush out again, without exchanging a civil word with anybody. Mankind, even of the first class, are dressed queerly in pea-coats, paletots, cloaks, and caps, with no sort of attention to elegance. They indulge much in comforters, and green and red handkerchiefs, and sometimes little is seen of their visages beyond the mouth and the point of the nose. While they stand at the bar eating or drinking, they look much like a set of wild beasts in a menagerie, taking huge bites and monstrous gulps, and often glaring wildly askance at each other, as if each dreaded that his neighbour would rob him of what he was devouring. It is a very unamiable sight, and has given me a very mean opinion of mankind. They appear to me a set of beings devoid of courtesy and refinement. None of them ever takes off hat or cap when eating, and not one of even those whom I suppose to be clergymen, ever says grace before the meat which I hand him. A soup or a sandwich is no better in this respect than a brandy and water. When a lady comes in amongst these rude ungracious animals, unless she has a husband or other friend to take some care of her, she is left to forage for herself; and I have seen some forlorn examples of the sex come very poorly off, while gentlemen were helping themselves to veal and ham pies, and slices of the cold round. I don't know any difference on mankind for a great number of years. They are just the same muffled-up, confused-looking, munching, glaring, bolting crew, as when I first became acquainted with them at the station. They are not conversable creatures. They seem to have no

idea of using the mouth and tongue for any purpose but that of eating. They can only ask for the things they wish to eat or drink and what they have to pay for them. Now and then, I hear some one making a remark to another, but it seldom goes beyond such subjects as the coldness of the night; and this, by a curious coincidence, I always find to be alluded to just before I am asked for a tumbler of punch, as if there were a necessary connection between the two ideas. Sometimes a gentleman, when the bell suddenly rings for seats, and he only begun to his cup of coffee and biscuit, will allow a naughty expression to escape him. Beyond this, mankind are a taciturn, stupid set. I am, indeed, rather at a loss to understand how all those things that one hears of in the newspapers come about. We are told there of statesmen who conduct public affairs, of soldiers who fight gallantly for their country, of great poets and novelists who charm their fellow-creatures, and of philosophers and divines who instruct them. A few will lay their heads together, and raise a Crystal Palace. Some will combine, and throw a tubular bridge across a strait of the sea. These things are a complete mystery to me, for I see nothing of mankind but coarse eating and drinking, and most undignified runnings off when the bell rings.

On account of these shocking habits on the part of mankind, I have for some time past entertained a great contempt for them, insomuch, that I almost wish to see them scald themselves with my cups of tea, and choke upon my pies. For me to think of marrying any specimen of so coarse a crew, is entirely out of the question; so it is quite as well that Tom Collard, the guard, left me for Betsy last summer, and that, as yet, no other follower has come forward. It will be best for them all to keep their distance—so assures them their obedient humble servant, SOPHIA TANKARD.

Science at Your Service

SCIENCE AND STOCKINGS

THREE years ago the hosiery and allied trades formed a research association under the aegis of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. Scientifically, knitting, particularly mechanised knitting, had until then been scarcely investigated. One example of progress already resulting from research has a major bearing upon the manufacture of stockings. Hitherto there have been considerable variations in the lengths of ladies' stockings and manufacturers have been obliged to pair and grade them for size at the final inspection after manufacture. It has been generally supposed that this problem could not be eased, that the influences causing length variations could not be more effectively controlled. Research has already shown, however, that these variations can be greatly reduced or eliminated altogether if more precise methods are adopted for setting-up and controlling the operation of the fine-gauge knitting-machines. Also, the tension in the yarns fed to the machines is an important influence. A special meter to measure tension has been devised. Ingenious though many modern production machines are, science is constantly required for controlling their day-by-day operation so that uniformity of product is secured. The work so far done in hosiery is just one example of the benefits to be obtained by applying research methods to an already highly-mechanised industry.

A CONTROLLED CIGARETTE-CASE

A recently-patented American invention has considerable interest for sociological historians of our times. It is a time-clock-controlled cigarette-case. In the bottom of the case is a watch mechanism that can be pre-set to allow the case to open at regular intervals as decided by the owner. The case cannot be opened between these intervals. Readers are warned not to write and ask where such cases may be obtained, for it is one thing for an invention to be patented and another for it to be produced. We do not know whether production is following the patent.

FIRE-SCREEN AND BLOWER

A new dual-purpose fire-screen deserves attention. Its second purpose is to function as a blower or draught-director for drawing up newly-lit or declining fires. The somewhat dangerous sheet of newspaper across the fireplace opening or the cumbersome sheet of metal are well enough known in many households. This fire-screen can perform the same task safely and effectively. When in position as a draught-director it acts as an enclosing canopy and has a controllable air-damper at the bottom. The appliance is made from steel-plate and is available in several finishes—bronze, light-green or blue-green enamel. It measures 2½ feet in height, 1 foot 8 inches in width, and is 6 inches deep.

ALUMINIUM SKYSCRAPER

If aluminium has established itself as the dominant metal for flight, it has not until now played a prominent part in man's efforts to move vertically from a ground-based foundation. At the end of 1952 a skyscraper block of offices in Pittsburgh was nearing completion. It has already become known as the Aluminium Tower. The structural frame of the building is made of steel, fireproofed with foam concrete. All the exterior walls, however, are composed of aluminium panels, reinforced with four inches of perlite-concrete. The heating-panels inside the building, the ventilation-ducts, much piping, and even the electric-wiring are also all made of aluminium. The building is thirty storeys high and, when completed, will be the lightest-weight structure of its size ever erected anywhere in the world. The selection of aluminium for every practicable use in modern building has undoubtedly been influenced by the fact that this new office skyscraper is being erected for one of the major aluminium organisations of the United States. The results may well stimulate a new and widened interest in aluminium as a building material. Its lightness and exceptional resistance to weathering are natural assets that have so far been under-exploited in conventional building.

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

EXCURSIONS TO THE MOON?

Space-travel fiction has its own magazines both for juvenile and adult readers and the inventive powers—if not perhaps the credibility—of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells have long ago been surpassed. But to-day the theory of space-travel is also taken exceedingly seriously and precisely. The 1952 Annual Report of the British Interplanetary Society, devoted almost entirely to a summary of papers read at the Third Astronautical Congress held at Stuttgart, is no less sensational because it discusses journeys to other planets soberly and scientifically. One paper begins: 'Interplanetary flight is not only technically possible but certain to be achieved within the next quarter-century.' The Astronomer-Royal, recently reviewing a book on this subject, thought it more likely to be achieved within fifty years.

One of the principal obstacles to be overcome is that of fuel supply and its cost. A fuel and an oxidant must be used for rocket propulsion, and combinations, such as liquid ozone and lithium, fluorine monoxide and liquid hydrogen, will be required. There are a number of possible combinations and choice will ultimately depend upon availability. Something like 1000 tons a day would be needed to maintain a supply trip service from the Earth to the invaded satellite. Any hopes for the reduction in costs of travel beyond the normality of this world seem to lie in establishing a base on the visited planet and producing fuel there, or bringing back other cargoes of value! A German paper read at the Stuttgart meeting puts forward the view that human life is possible only on the Earth, that the fundamental conditions for organic life cannot exist on the Moon or on the planets of the solar system. Mars alone may be supporting primitive vegetation. While this is reassuring from the angle of local resistance to the exploitation of materials on another planet, it is not perhaps as comforting to those who embark upon the first trips. Nevertheless, the probabilities of interplanetary flight cannot be lightly dismissed. An astonishing amount of scientific development has already taken place, theoretical though much of it still may be. Younger readers of this journal may well see the first attempts in their lifetimes. Thirteen countries now have altogether seventeen societies solely devoted to studying the problems of space-travel.

A GUM-BOOT REMOVER

Irritation as well as necessity is at times the mother of invention. A minor annoyance of farm or country life is the awkward operation of removing tight-fitting or very muddy gum-boots. Even if a pair of gum-boots can normally be detached from the wearer's feet quite easily, it is certainly not a clean task when the boots are covered with clay, mud, etc. Some ingenious person must have experienced this irritating job too often, for a simple device for taking off gum-boots without handling them or without even bending down is now marketed by a British company. It is made of steel, has a looped handle for holding it, and a specially shaped fork at the other end for gripping the heel of the boot. Held vertically behind the leg, the appliance keeps the gum-boot in a firm position while the wearer steps out of it. It is made with an anti-rust finish.

HOUSING TARGETS

A technique used in the American building industry is currently being examined by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. It is based upon fastening tools which are actuated by explosives. Thus, in fixing metal or wooden objects to walls, floors, etc., a pin is fired from the muzzle of the fixing tool, the force coming from a blank cartridge. The method is said to be applicable to concrete, steel, or brickwork, and can be used for securing such house fitments as electrical junction-boxes as well as light and more superficial gadgets. The time saved in the final stages of building houses is considerable. Pin-firing is quicker than nailing, yet can be applied for most purposes where screwing is considered essential.

ADJUSTABLE TABLE-LAMP

A new adjustable lamp-holder, designed for carrying a 40-watt bulb to throw light on a worktable or desk, seems likely to enjoy a wide demand. The holder has three vertical joints and a horizontal swivel-joint. It is fitted to a wall or table by means of a clamp faced with soft felt, and it is claimed that no mark will be left by the clamp however highly polished the surface. A specially-designed shade is included in the appliance and the switch is fixed just above the shade. Simplicity of design has brought remarkable economy in cost and price without sacrificing the effective positional freedom of this type of lamp.

SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

A DIMMING-SWITCH

With gas-lighting or even with oil-lamps it is possible to adjust the intensity of light, but the electric domestic light has long been operated without this flexibility, with a switch that is either 'on' or 'off.' The advent of television has stimulated a demand for flexibility, particularly for a dimmed-light possibility. A switch is now available that enables the normal electric-bulb to be varied from full illumination power to a dim glow through six stages. It also has an off position, so that it may be fitted as an ordinary wall-switch if desired, though probably in a majority of cases it will be preferred as an intervening fitment to the ordinary room circuit. It is claimed to reduce consumption of electricity as well as to control the degree of illumination. The switch is fitted with a standard $\frac{1}{2}$ amp fuse and a spare fuse is carried inside the plastic moulding of the control-knob. This switch is designed for alternating-current main supply only. It can be introduced without altering existing house circuits.

ANOTHER DIMMING-SWITCH

Another switch offering graduated control over electric-lighting is designed for insertion into the lead-wire of a table- or standard-lamp. The switch is suitable for both A.C. and D.C. supply. A press-button movement produces dimmed illumination. Three graduations of light are obtainable. Two different models of the switch are available, one for a 25 to 60 watt range, the other for a 75-100 watt range.

THE MAKE-UP OF FLAVOUR

In a century of synthetic achievement it is almost reassuring to learn that some quite common things are unlikely to be accurately imitated by science. The aromatic flavour of an apple is one such example. Years of delicate and elaborate investigations at the Eastern Regional Research Laboratory, U.S.A., have isolated the flavour-giving material in apples—a volatile part of the juice that is present only to the extent of 50 parts

in 1,000,000. This natural essence, when extracted, can be separately used in making beverages or confectionery products, but it is so complex a mixture of many different chemicals that synthetic reproduction seems hardly practicable. So far twenty-six different chemicals have been identified, including eight different alcohols, and five different esters. Since so little of so complex a mixture gives apples their characteristic flavour, it is easy to understand how by chemical change or loss by volatilisation the true flavour of an apple can alter during storage.

NYLON PAINT-BRUSHES

Several years ago attention was drawn here to the then-new development of nylon paint-brushes. Initial tests had shown that nylon bristles gave exceptionally long performance without deterioration. The working painter, however, is concerned with other factors besides durability. One of the most important factors is the paint-holding capacity of a brush. A well-known paint and decorating-materials company has recently published the results of tests carried out to assess the paint-holding capacity of brushes with variously composed bristles. A brush with 55 per cent bristle and 45 per cent horsehair had the highest paint-holding capacity—68 grams. A brush made up with 75 per cent crimped nylon filament and 25 per cent straight nylon held 54 grams. A 50-50 mixture of crimped and straight nylon held 50 grams. An all-bristle brush, rather surprisingly, had a holding-capacity of 43 grams. Straight nylon only could not hold more than 19 grams. The paint-holding capacity of crimped (or tapered) nylon is not inferior to that of natural filaments therefore, unless comparison is made with a mixture of bristle and horsehair. The same tests also considered quality of paint finish. Here the straight nylon brush emerged with the highest honours, but crimped nylon was judged to give the next best performance. It seems clear that even in a highly traditional field modern synthetic fibres are making rapid progress.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

Better Border Carnations

I OFTEN wonder why the border carnations are not grown more. They are not exacting as to soil, they grow in the North as well as in the South, they like a nice open position which receives direct sunlight and which is not overshadowed by trees and buildings, and they ask for lots of lime in the soil.

Having chosen the spot where the carnations are going to be, fork over the ground thoroughly and add well-rotted compost or sedge-peat at about two good buckets to the square yard. Then into the top two inches of soil work in a balanced fish-manure with a 10 per cent potash content at the rate of 4 to 5 ounces to the square yard. Remember to give regular dressings of this organic fertiliser during the growing season from, say, the end of April to the beginning of September. During this period 2 ounces should be given to the square yard every four weeks. Lime must always be given, and it is usually needed at the rate of 6 to 7 ounces to the square yard as a top-dressing after the fish-manure has been raked in at preparation time. Every autumn after the year of planting, give a dressing at 4 ounces to the square yard.

Plant the carnations during the month of March in the South, and during the month of April in the North. See that the plants go in firmly at about a foot apart, but never plant too deeply, because here you have a plant that dislikes moisture around its neck at soil level. When the plants arrive, cut off any damaged or cracked leaves and then pop the plants in a little water in a bucket for half-an-hour. Prepare a hole with a trowel and put the ball of soil in so that the roots are just buried. Never plant deeply. I purposely repeat this advice.

Wait till the first dry spell in early May and then hoe the ground lightly, and be prepared to support the plants by using twiggy sticks or, if you prefer, one of those galvanised rods which has a movable ring attached to it. The ring encloses the flowering stems and can be raised as they grow. Do not forget to disbud in the summer. It is an easy matter to pinch off the lateral buds so as to allow the main flower to develop fully.

There are a number of varieties to choose from, but I would suggest Ebor, a chocolate flaked with red; Beauty of Cambridge, a strong and erect pale yellow; Down's Unique, a cream marked with scarlet; Old Crimson Clove, which has a lovely strong scent; Lavender Clove, which smells like heliotrope or cherry-pie; Robin Thain, a white marked with crimson; W. B. Cranfield, a geranium scarlet; and Teviotdale, a ruby rose with an apricot tone.

In addition to the border carnations, there are the cottage carnations which really are hardy and stand up to almost any frost. They do not seem to mind heavy snow, and they put up with rain galore. They can be planted as close as nine inches square and they are equally at home as the main feature of the bed or in a mixed herbaceous border. Good varieties are Cottage Scarlet, which is rich in perfume; Cottage Orange, a very hardy apricot orange; Cottage Pink, a flesh pink; Cottage Mauve, which has an excellent habit of growth; Cottage White, which is highly fragrant; and the brilliant scarlet Cottage Vivid, which is a fine bedding-plant.

If you want to propagate your carnations, an excellent method is layering, bending down the lower part of a young shoot and covering it with soil so that it will root. Start layering in July and, if necessary, continue through August. For the propagating soil I use a mixture of soil and sedge-peat in equal parts, adding some sharp silver-sand to keep the earth open. Make a cut with a sharp knife into the centre of the shoot above one of the lower nodes. Cut upwards, stopping at the next node. A tongue is thus formed, and this can be kept open with a matchstick and buried with the soil mixture. If the soil is kept moist, border carnations usually root in from three to five weeks. When rooted, sever the layer from the parent plant, but do not pot it up until a week later.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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